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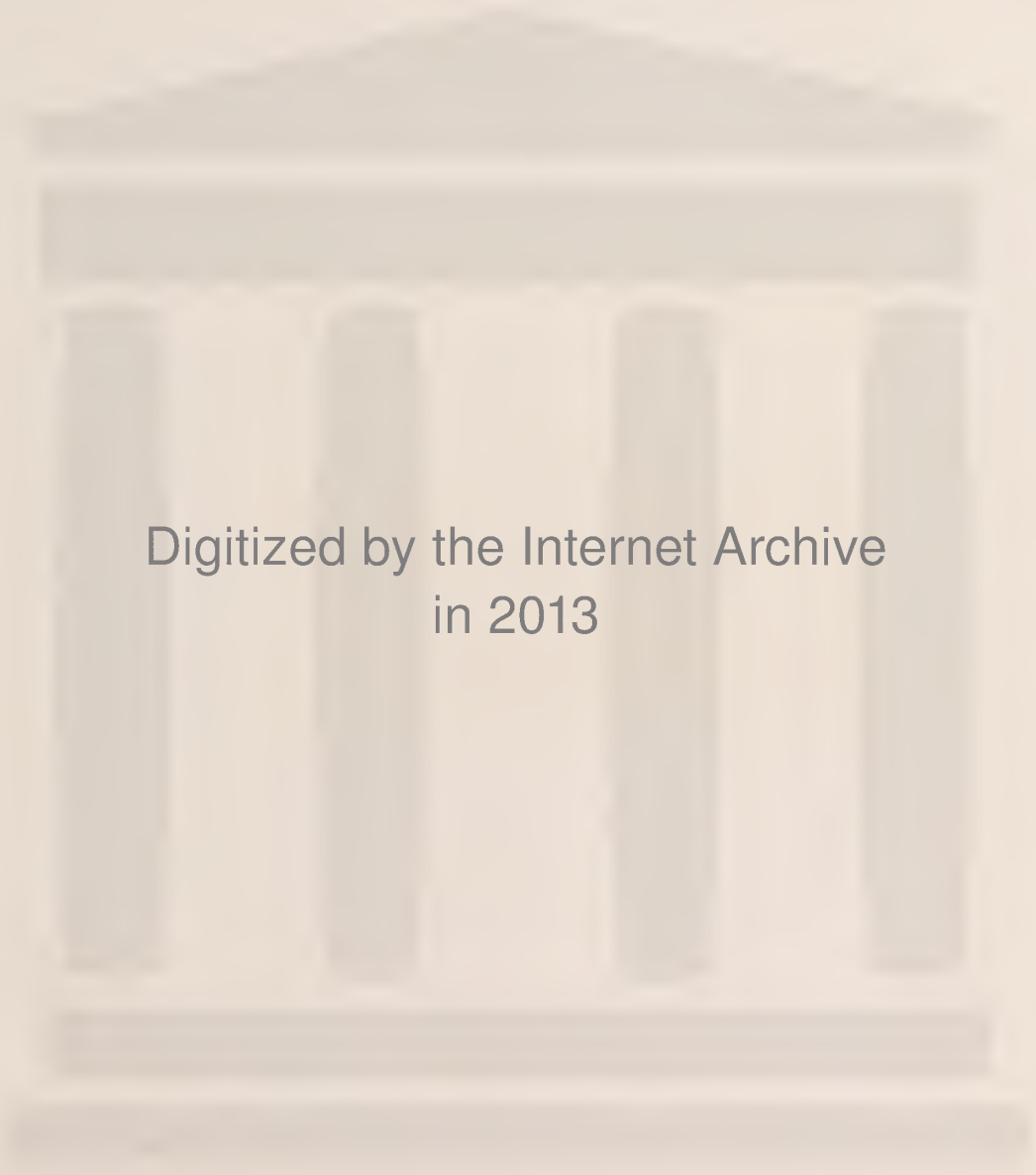
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THE

WORKS

OF THE

REVEREND AND LEARNED

ISAAC WATTS, D.D.

CONTAINING, BESIDES HIS

SERMONS, AND ESSAYS ON MISCELLANEOUS SUBJECTS,

SEVERAL ADDITIONAL PIECES,

Selected from his Manuscripts

BY THE

REV. DR. JENNINGS, AND THE REV. DR. DODDRIDGE, IN 1753:

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED,

MEMOIRS OF THE LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,

COMPILED

BY THE REV. GEORGE BURDER.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

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DESCRIPTION OF THE FRONTISPIECE.

In the Centre, beneath the Portrait of Dr. Watts, is the Bible, that holy book, the elucidation of which was the grand object of his life and labours—The Torch annexed, signifies the light thrown upon it by his learned and diligent researches. **On the Left** is a Lyre, the emblem of his poetical talents, which were so admirably employed in the service of devotion—A Globe, bedecked with Stars, resting on a Volume of his Philosophical Works, denotes his attention to Astronomy and other polite sciences; while the Flame issuing from it, directs our thoughts to the end of time, and that eternal world towards which his pious writings are always conducting us. **On the Right,** the Caduceus and Sceptre, are emblems of his extraordinary talents and superior powers; while the Temple of Fame denotes that high degree of reputation which his learning, piety, diligence, and usefulness, have so deservedly acquired. The Glory **at the Top of the Print** is in honour of the Redeemer, Jesus Salvator Hominum, to whom all the writings of our Author were sincerely devoted.

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MEMOIRS

OF THE

REV. ISAAC WATTS, D.D.

WE are strongly inclined to make ourselves acquainted with the history and character of our instructors. If we derive much pleasure from the writings of an author, we are naturally inquisitive respecting him, especially if he be a writer on *theological* subjects. We wish to know what are his qualifications for the sacred office of a teacher of religion; and we scarcely admit his claim to that character, until we can form a favourable opinion of his piety and talents. Hence the peculiar value of ecclesiastical biography, which becomes the more interesting, when the subject of it has acquired great celebrity in the church of Christ; when his writings are read by thousands of thousands; when his works, after having stood the test of a century, not only maintain their place in the public esteem, but become more and more valuable in the opinion of wise and good men. Such is the rank which the following Works of Dr. Watts hold in the literary and religious world. It may therefore be reasonably expected, that a new and standard edition of his writings should be accompanied with a full and impartial account of their author. This we are now enabled to effect, in a manner superior to that which was in the power of those worthy men, Dr. D. Jennings and Dr. P. Doddridge, who superintended the first edition of his works. The Life of Dr. Watts, prefixed to that publication, was by no means calculated to satisfy the mind of an inquisitive reader; nor was it worthy of the great and good man whose memoirs it contains.* Since that period, several writers have favoured the public with larger accounts of his life, particularly Dr. Gibbons, whose memoirs were derived from an intimate acquaintance with the Doctor himself; from his brother, Mr. Enoch Watts; from original letters; and from other authentic sources of information. Dr. Johnson also, in his Lives of the Poets, has with a masterly pen drawn the character of our author—a character which, perhaps, does him the greater honour, as the writer was far from being partial to that religious body which produced, and has been so much honoured by, Dr. Watts. From these memoirs, and some others of less consideration, the editor has compiled the following pages, which he trusts will present to the reader a fair and full delineation of one of the most excellent and useful characters that ever adorned the christian church.

* As an apology for the first editors of his works, it may be observed, that they state it to have been the wish of Dr. Watts, that no history of his life should be published; that he absolutely declined providing any materials for that purpose; and that he desired his character might stand in the world merely as it would appear in his works. Whatever influence this humble wish of the author might have had on the minds of his particular friends, it cannot *now* be considered as a prohibition. The life of a great and good man is public property; and the light of his character must not be concealed any more than that of his works.

Southampton had the honour of giving birth to Dr. Isaac Watts. He was born there July 17, 1674. His father was a very worthy and respectable man, who presided over a boarding school of considerable reputation. He was a dissenter, and had suffered imprisonment for his nonconformity; during which, it is said, that the mother of Dr. Watts has been known to sit on a stone, near the prison door, suckling her son Isaac.*

The inclination of Isaac Watts to literary pursuits discovered itself at a period unusually early. Before he could speak with perfect plainness, he would say, when money was given to him—"A book, a book—buy a book." His early desire of learning was gratified by his intelligent father, so that he began to learn Latin when only four years

* The grandfather and grandmother of Dr. Watts were also persons of excellent character. The former, Mr. Thomas Watts, was a gentleman of various and remarkable acquirements. He was well acquainted with mathematics, painting, music, and poetry. He was also a man of great personal courage. The editor has been assured by a descendant of the Doctor's sister, now living, that being in the East Indies, and in danger of being seized by a tiger, he took refuge in a river, into which the furious animal followed him, swimming. Mr. Watts approached the tiger, and by forcing his head under water, preserved his own life, and destroyed that of his enemy. This gentleman became the commander of a ship of war, which being on fire, he was drowned in his endeavours to escape from the conflagration.

The relict of Mr. Thomas Watts survived many years. To her memory Dr. Watts devotes a poem in his Horæ Lyricæ—"On the death of an aged and honoured relative, July 13, 1693."

The father of Dr. Watts, who had a numerous family, lived to a good old age, and enjoyed one of the highest gratifications on earth—that of witnessing the growing fame and extending usefulness of his son Isaac, the eldest of his nine children. The following verses, written by the old gentleman at the advanced age of eighty-five, afford a pleasing testimony of his piety and talents, though inferior, in poetical merit, to the productions of his son.

Worn with the toils of fourscore years and five,
  A weary pilgrim, Lord, to thee I come;
To beg supporting grace, till I arrive
  At heav'n, thy promis'd rest, my wish'd-for home.

Here's nothing to invite my longer stay
  Among the darksome melancholy cells;
When shall I leave this tenement of clay?
  Fain would I be where my Redeemer dwells.

Oh! had I but some generous seraph's wing,
  There's nothing should prevail to keep me here;
But with the morning lark I'd mount and sing,
  Till I had left earth's gloomy atmosphere:

My soul directly rising upward still,
  'Till I should reach the glorious courts above,
Where endless pleasure my desires shall fill,
  And solac'd be with my dear Jesus' love.

With sweet refreshment, on such things as these,
  My serious thoughts have often been employ'd;
But how much more will happiness increase,
  When more than can be thought will be enjoy'd?

These lines are copied from the "Posthumous Works of Dr. Watts," as they are called, in which they are twice inserted; in page 28 as the composition of the father; in page 167 as the work of the son. A sad instance of the carelessness of the editor, a gay young man, to whose care a box of manuscripts, left by Mr. Watts, Sen. had been committed by one of the family. A selection from these, with some imperfect sketches of the Doctor's hymns, and some letters between him and Mr. Bradbury (which ought never to have been published), formed a wretched work, unjustly styled, "The Posthumous Works of Dr. Watts." The book is little known, and will soon sink into complete oblivion.

old. His education was first entrusted to the superintendence of a worthy clergyman, the Rev. John Pinhorne, master of the grammar school at Southampton; of whose able attention to his improvement, the Doctor bears honourable testimony in a Latin ode, inscribed to that valuable man. It is unnecessary to say, that young Watts made a considerable proficiency in the learned languages; his works are the best monuments of his classical acquirements.

The marks of superior genius were soon discovered by his worthy parents. Mrs. Watts, it seems, sometimes employed the pupils, after school hours, in composing a few lines of poetry, for which she would reward each of them with a farthing. On one of these occasions, Isaac being requested to do the same, produced the following couplet:

> "I write not for a farthing, but to try
> How I your farthing writers can outvie."

About the same time, his piety, as well as his talents, became conspicuous. In an acrostic on his own name, we have the following lines, predictive, as it were, of his future character in the church—*the sweet singer of the British Israel.*

> W ash me in thy blood, O Christ,
> A nd grace divine impart;
> T hen search and try the corners of my heart,
> T hat I in all things may be fit to do
> S ervice to thee, and sing thy praises too.

The promising talents of Isaac Watts soon recommended him to the attention of the neighbouring gentlemen. It was to the honour of Dr. Speed, a physician of Southampton, that he proposed to support him by subscription at one of the English universities; but his attachment to the cause of nonconformity, though at that time oppressed, would not suffer him to accept the generous offer. "I am determined," said he, "to take my lot with the dissenters."

Having well studied the principles of nonconformity, on which, probably, the sufferings of his father had afforded some useful lessons, and being satisfied that those principles were most congenial with a kingdom "not of this world," he readily declined the flattering prospects of elevation and emolument, which his abilities and the proposed patronage offered to his view; and in these principles, candid as he was to pious christians of every denomination, he continued stedfast to the end of his days. In consequence of this resolution, having already made considerable advances in classical learning, he was placed under the care of the Rev. Thomas Rowe, then pastor of a dissenting congregation at Haberdashers' Hall, London, and tutor of a seminary for the education of students in divinity.* Here his conduct was in all respects so excellent,

* From the first general incorporation of the dissenting interest, occasioned by the rigid persecutions of the hierarchy, after the restoration of Charles II. the body of nonconformists have always deemed it an important object to provide a succession of ministers competently qualified with divine and human knowledge. Deprived of the splendid advantages of Oxford and Cambridge, they have endeavoured, and with no inconsiderable success, to supply the necessities of their churches by seminaries of a more private and humble kind. In every dissenting academy, founded on evangelical principles, satisfactory evidence is required, that the candidates for admission have experienced the power of religion upon their hearts, that they have suitable capacities for the reception of knowledge, and that they are possessed of talents adapted to the service of the church. During their academical residence, vigilant

that his tutor declared, he never gave him any occasion of reproof, but his behaviour was so exemplary, that he was often proposed as a pattern to his fellow-students. While he was a student in this academy, he became a member of the church, in his nineteenth year, under the pastoral care of his tutor.*

The diligence and success with which Mr. Watts pursued his studies, may be judged of by the dissertations which he left in manuscript, some of which may be seen in Dr. Gibbons's work.† "These," says Dr. Johnson, "shew a degree of knowledge, both philosophical and theological, such as very few attain by a much longer course of study." Happily for those who wish to imitate this successful student, the methods by which he rose to eminence may be learned from his writings, especially from that admirable work, "The Improvement of the Mind."

From hence it appears, that his method of study was to impress upon his memory the contents of whatever books he read, by abridging them; and sometimes, by interleaving them, to amplify one system with supplements from another, of which Dr. Gibbons has given some curious and instructive instances. He abridged Theophilus Gale's learned treatise, "The Court of the Gentiles," and it is much to be regretted that his abridgment should be buried in oblivion. He epitomized a treatise of Lewis de la Forge upon the human mind, and extracted a number of "Logical Questions from Burgendicius and Heereboord," two celebrated foreign writers. The Westminster Greek Grammar he interleaved, and improved by extracts and corrections from the grammars of Dr. Busby and Mr. Leeds. His labours in this way amounted to several considerable volumes in

attention is paid to maintaining inviolate the honours of practical godliness; and that residence would, in any instance, be terminated by an act of immoral or scandalous conduct. In the whole course of study, supreme homage is paid to the WORD of GOD; and languages and sciences are pursued with a constant reference to the increase of divine wisdom and general usefulness. When these advantages are duly considered, dissenters have good reason to be reconciled to their exclusion from the noble endowments, the magnificent libraries, and the splendid honours of those universities. Dr. Knox has made the following candid remarks on this subject:

"I believe it to have been a very happy circumstance for Mr. Secker (afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury), that he was educated in a dissenting academy, and under so good a tutor. I attribute much of his future eminence to this circumstance, as well as to the connection he fortunately formed there, that purity, that dignity, that decency of character, which enabled him to fill the great offices of the church with singular weight and efficacy. Educated in the dissenting persuasion, and under dissenting tutors, he had paid less attention to polite letters, and more to divinity, than is usually bestowed by students in the universities. Young men in Oxford and Cambridge frequently arrive at an age for orders, and become successful candidates for them, who have studied scarcely any other divinity than such as is to be found in Ovid's Metamorphoses, and Tooke's Pantheon. Few regularly bred divines, as they are termed, apply themselves to divinity at so early an age; and, indeed, through the defect of a knowledge, and of a taste for it in youth, many, after obtaining orders, still continue to study, if they study at all, the theology of Athens and Rome. But the dissenters study divinity at an early age; and if they had united the study of the belles lettres with it in due proportion, I believe their divines would have made a still more honourable appearance than they have done, though they are, and ever have been, highly respectable."

The importance of this remark is now generally acknowledged by the conductors of the most respectable dissenting seminaries, and improvements have been adopted in their plans of education, to render them as complete as circumstances will permit.

* Among the fellow-students of Dr. Watts was Mr. Hughes, the poet, and Mr. Horte, who afterwards conformed, and became Archbishop of Tuam. Mr. Say, the successor of Mr. Edward Calamy, was also of their number.

† Dr. Gibbons has printed from a MS. volume, containing twenty-two Latin theses, two on the following subjects: "An Deus sit verax?" and "An mens humana sit immaterialis?" both which he has translated into English. He has also given dissertations on the following subjects: "Whether the doctrine of justification by faith alone tends to licentiousness?" and "Whether self-denial, in things in themselves indifferent, be not in some cases necessary?"

MS. and it is probable that he pursued the other methods recommended in his treatise, such as making indexes and tables of contents to books that wanted them; writing annotations in the margin and blank leaves, either to confirm, illustrate, or confute his author, as he thought necessary.

It is peculiarly worthy of remark, with what zeal and modesty, piety and candour, he sought for truth, particularly in the study of the scriptures; constantly imploring the teaching of the Holy Spirit as his guide; always proposing his own opinions with diffidence, and defending them with moderation. It is equally to his honour that all his studies, and even his amusements, were directed to *one* end—the grand aim of his life and ministry. Even his lighter compositions discover a vein of seriousness; and he seldom translates or imitates a heathen poet, but he either makes him a christian in the end, or shews his deficiency in not being one. The classics have doubtless their use, as well as beauties; but it is much to be feared, that their indiscriminate perusal leads many of our youth into the paths of vice, strewed with the flowers of Parnassus; and it is truly disgraceful to divines (professionally such), when they copy the licentious and profane sentiments of the gentile poets. Surely if Virgil and Horace had been christians, they would never have celebrated the pagan idols, as some of their modern imitators have done; at least, we have no example of this kind in the *early* converts to christianity. They would rather have spurned the whole rabble of fictitious deities, in the spirit of Watts himself:

> "Thy name, Almighty Sire, and thine
> Jesus, where his full glories shine
> Shall consecrate my lays."*

During the time of his studies, Mr. Watts cultivated an acquaintance with the Muses; or, as he modestly expresses it, was "a maker of verses," from fifteen years of age. His Latin epistle to his brother Enoch "going a voyage" is dated in his seventeenth year (1691), and his verses to Mr. (afterwards archbishop) Horte, his Latin epistle to his brother Richard, the physician, with several other pieces, both Latin and English, published in his Lyric Odes, were written, we believe, before he was twenty.

The only circumstance our author seems to have regretted in his early studies is, that they were *midnight* studies, and against this he cautions future students very pathetically, as indeed many others have done, who have felt their pernicious consequences to the close of life.†

When Mr. Watts had finished his studies, at the age of twenty, he returned and spent two years under his father's roof, where, instead of entering immediately on his public work, he endeavoured to improve himself farther in the branches of knowledge immediately connected with his profession; and now a circumstance occurred which laid the foundation of his future popularity as a christian poet. He attended the same ministry as his father, who was perhaps at this very time a deacon of the church. The poetical compositions here sung were of a very humble class, and our young poet could not help expressing his disgust at them, regretting that his favourite part of worship

* See his poem to Mr. Pinhorne, and Dr. Gibbons's translation.

† "Midnight studies are prejudicial to nature, and painful experience calls me to repent of the faults of my younger years, and there are many before me have had the same call to repentance." Sermon xx.

should be so miserably performed.* His father, knowing his poetical turn, desired him to try if he could do better. He did so. One hymn after another was produced and approved; and he was encouraged to proceed, till, even before he left his father, he had composed a considerable number of his hymns, though he did not publish them for several years after.

From his father's house he was invited by Sir John Hartopp, Bart. to reside in his family at Stoke Newington, as tutor to his son, where he spent five years very agreeably in superintending Mr. Hartopp's studies, while at the same time he did not neglect his own. He now felt the want of good elementary books for a liberal education, and here probably laid the plans, and collected part of the materials, of several of his subsequent publications, particularly his Logic, Geography, and Astronomy.

Mr. Watts's long silence, after completing his studies with such eclat, and in the prime of his health, can only be accounted for from his extreme diffidence. On the day, however, which completed his twenty-fourth year (1698), he preached his first sermon; and his ministry meeting with great acceptance, the same year he was chosen assistant to Dr. Chauncy, pastor of the independent congregation in Mark-lane, London. His ministerial labours, however, were soon interrupted by a painful illness, of five months continuance; in which he learned that patience in suffering was a part of christian duty no less important than activity in labour.

His health being gradually restored, he returned to his public duty; and upon Dr. Chauncy's resignation, in January, 1702, Mr. Watts was called to succeed him, in the same church of which the famous Dr. John Owen had formerly been pastor. This call, with great diffidence and modesty, and after much deliberation, he accepted on March 8th, the very day on which King William died—a day very discouraging and alarming to the dissenting interest.

Mr. Watts, who had not entered upon the service of God without duly counting the cost, was not to be discouraged by difficulties, nor deterred by opposition. His public declaration of acquiescence in the choice of the church (of which some abstracts are here subjoined) will gratify every reader of spiritual discernment.

"Brethren,

"You know the constant aversion I have had to any proposals of a pastoral office for these three years. You know also, that since you have given me a unanimous call thereto, I have proposed several methods for your settlement without me, but your choice and your affections seemed to be still unmoved. I have objected my own indisposition of body, and I have pointed to three divines, members of this church, whose gifts might render them more proper for instruction, and their age for government. These things I have urged till I have provoked you to sorrow and tears, and till I myself have been almost ashamed. But your perseverance in your choice, your constant profession of edification by my ministry, the great probability you shew me of building up this famous and decayed church of Christ, and your prevailing fears of its dissolution if I refuse, have given me ground to believe, that the voice of this church is the voice of Christ; and to answer this call, I have not consulted with flesh and blood: I have laid aside the thoughts of myself to serve the interest of our Lord. I give up my own ease

* Gibbons, p. 254.

for your spiritual profit and your increase. I submit my inclinations to my duty, and in hopes of being made an instrument to build up this ancient church, I return this solemn answer to your call, that, with a great sense of my own inability, in mind and body, to discharge the duties of so sacred an office, I do, in the strength of Christ, venture upon it, and in his name I accept your call, promising, in the presence of God and his saints, my utmost diligence in all the duties of a pastor, so far as God shall enlighten and strengthen me; and I leave this promise in the hands of Christ our Mediator, to see it performed by me unto you, through the assistance of his grace and Spirit."

Ten days after this he was ordained in the method customary among dissenters, by "the laying on of the hands of the presbytery," or the elders, that is, the pastors, of neighbouring churches. The ministers engaged on this occasion were, the Rev. M. Clark, T. Collins, T. Ridgely, B. Rowe, and T. Rowe, his tutor.

His ministerial work was again soon suspended by a painful and alarming illness, from which his recovery was very slow and gradual. It was therefore judged necessary to provide him an assistant in the person of Mr. *Samuel Price*, in July 1703, who, ten years after, was ordained co-pastor with him; and the most cordial friendship subsisted between these amiable men for the remainder of their lives.

In June 1704 this congregation removed, on account of the decayed state of the building, from Mark Lane to Pinner's Hall, where Mr. Watts, when able, preached every Sunday morning, till the people built a new meeting-house in Berry Street, which was opened in 1708, and became the future scene of his ministerial labours.

We must now introduce our young divine to the reader as an author of the first eminence in a certain line, and of great respectability in almost every walk of literature: Dr. Jennings, who preached his funeral sermon, questions whether any author before Dr. Watts ever appeared with reputation on such a variety of subjects as he has done, both as a prose writer and a poet.

It has been observed of literary men, and particularly of divines, that from the even tenour of their lives they afford little interest to the reader. This may be true of minor writers, whose works frequently die with them; but cannot apply to such characters as Watts, many of whose writings have produced far greater benefits to mankind than the noisy exploits of heroes and statesmen, and will probably remain coeval with our language. His labours have been the means of instructing thousands of the rising generations in the first principles of morals and religion; and while he has taught our children to read, he has instructed our philosophers in the art of reasoning. His sermons and treatises have taught theology to our divines, and his psalms and hymns have led the devotion of millions in their public worship, and animated the praises of thousands on their dying beds.

The year 1706 introduced to the world his first work, the HORÆ LYRICÆ;* and, excepting the years of his indisposition, we shall find few that were not distinguished by some valuable production.

The preface to the Lyric Poems contains a defence of sacred poetry, which one would be tempted to think Dr. *Johnson* had never read, though he incorporated the poems in his poetical collection; or it is difficult to account for his saying of devotional poetry,

* See Vol. IV.

" the paucity of its topics enforces perpetual repetition; and the sanctity of the matter rejects the ornaments of figurative diction."* On the contrary, our author has shewn that the sacred poet possesses advantages almost infinite, in the variety as well as the dignity of his topics; and that they reject no embellishments, though they require them to be used with judgment. So a fine person, though always commanding respect, will appear to most advantage in a dress of becoming dignity and splendour. The best answer to the objection of our critic (as well as to his predecessor *Boileau*, who urged the same objection) is to be found in the odes themselves, where the various topics of divinity are treated with unprecedented ability. Nothing uninspired can be more sublime than the third hymn, on God's dominion and decrees, particularly from the seventh verse.

" Chained to his throne a volume lies
With all the fates of men," &c.

The following piece on the " Divine Judgments," in Pindaric measure, is in the true spirit of that poet, and the concluding lines breathe the most exalted piety:

" Be thou my God, and the whole world is mine:
While thou art Sov'reign I'm secure;
I shall be rich till thou art poor;
For all I fear, and all I wish, heaven, earth, and hell, are thine!"

It is not our design, however, to write a commentary; if any part of the volume be thought to need apology, it may be the Hymns on Divine Love, on the model of the Song of Solomon. To those who admit this book into their sacred canon, that may be deemed sufficient authority; and others may be referred to some of the compositions of David, Isaiah, and Hosea. The fact is, " to the pure all things are pure;" while a defiled imagination will find food for its licentious appetite in the songs of heaven. Nothing is more offensive to the ears of the world, than the language of a saint upon the verge of glory. It being observed to Dr. *Finley* (a late president of New Jersey College, in America) in his last illness, that he always used the expression " *Dear* Lord" in his prayers, he replied, " Oh! he is *very dear—very precious* indeed!"† That such expressions should ever excite a carnal idea, can only arise from an extreme carnality in our affections. Old-Testament saints are described as those who *love* the Lord, and to the New-Testament believers he is *precious*. We are not, however, pleading for the frequent and indiscriminate use of such expressions, which, though they appear decorous from the lips of genuine piety, are exceedingly disgustful from the mouths of light and wanton professors.‡

" As a poet, (says Dr. Johnson), had he been *only* a poet, he would probably have stood high among the authors with whom he is now associated. For his judgment was exact, and he noted beauties and faults with very nice discernment; his imagination, as the Dacian Battle proves, was vigorous and active, and the stores of knowledge were

* Dr. Johnson's Prefaces to the Poets, Vol. IV. † Evangelical Magazine, Nov. 1805.

‡ In his preface to the *Lyric Poems*, p. 23, the Doctor makes the following declaration—" Among the songs that are dedicated to *divine love*, I think I may be bold to assert, that I never composed one line of them with any other design than what they are applied to here; and I have endeavoured to secure them all from being perverted and debased to wanton passions, by several lines in them that can never be applied to a meaner love."

large by which his fancy was to be supplied. His ear was well tuned, and his diction was elegant and copious."

In a following paragraph, however, some abatements are made in this poetical character. Though "his imagination was *vigorous* and active," it is asked, "who does not wish for a greater measure of vigour in his writings?" Though "his ear was well tuned," yet "his rhymes are not always sufficiently correspondent." These little inconsistencies shew the difficulty of acting the professional critic, when a man is obliged to find fault with others to shew his own sagacity. It must be owned, however, he was not always exact in his rhymes, and he offers an apology for it in his hymns, namely, the frequent recurrence of scriptural and theological terms, which admit few words to rhyme with them. Our author also constantly prefers sense to sound; and we may add, that, in his time, it was allowed to make those accommodations in the pronunciation of certain letters which would hardly be now tolerated; such, for instance, as the two sounds of *y* in *sky* and *free*,* to each of which he admits the word *liberty* as a sufficient chime.

But we must proceed to his Hymns, of which the occasion has been already intimated. A curious letter from his brother Enoch is preserved, in which he urges him to the publication of his Hymns, and the whole is so interesting and lively that we shall subjoin it to this memoir. But notwithstanding this and other solicitations, the first edition of his Hymns was not published till 1707, when the copy-right was sold to Mr. Lawrence, the bookseller, for 10l. only, as was Milton's Paradise Lost about half a century before for 15l.—*Query*. Could these copy-rights be now re-assumed by an individual, with the *then* supposed perpetuity of copy-right, at what price would they be estimated? A few thousands would not pay for either.

Sometime in 1712 we find our poet at Tunbridge Wells, and in a cheerful moment writing a few verses on Lady Sunderland, whose person and accomplishments were then the admiration of the fashionable world: The only instance in which we find him indulging his muse in any thing like gallantry, or mere compliment; and this was on a peculiar occasion. Some anonymous verses having been attributed to Mr. Watts, which he thought bordered on profaneness, he wrote these to shew that a poet might flatter very sufficiently without borrowing any of the attributes of Divinity.

In September, Mr. Watts was seized with a most alarming fever, which shook his constitution, and left a weakness upon his nerves which he never wholly recovered. His sweet and profitable reflections during this long illness, are preserved in his Miscellaneous Thoughts, No. XLVII,† wherein he describes the hurry of his spirits in a nervous fever—the inward peace of mind he enjoyed—and his prospects of returning health.

* See Art of Reading, Vol. IV. Chap. xx.

† Yet, gracious God, amidst these storms of nature,
Thine eyes behold a sweet and sacred calm
Reign through the realms of conscience. All within
Lies peaceful, all compos'd. 'Tis wondrous grace
Keeps off thy terrors from this humble bosom.
Though stain'd with sins and follies yet serene
In penitential peace, and cheerful hope,
Sprinkled and guarded with atoning blood.
Thy vital smiles, amidst this desolation,
Like heav'nly sunbeams hid behind the clouds,
Break out in happy moments with bright radiance

Painful and distressing as was this affliction, it was attended with a most consoling circumstance—his introduction to the acquaintance of Sir Thomas Abney, Knt. and Alderman, and then Lord Mayor of London, in whose family, at Newington, he spent the remainder of his days; and where he enjoyed every comfort which generous opulence and christian friendship could afford; with every convenience for retirement, study, and composition.

Before this illness, our author had been encouraged by the rapid sale of his Hymns, and the general approbation they had met with, to attempt a version of the PSALMS, upon a new plan. By this time they had been nearly half composed, and the long cessation of his public labours now gave him the opportunity, as his health gradually recovered, to complete his design by the year 1719, when they were first published, and four thousand sold within the year. "If an author's own opinion may be taken," says the Doctor in one of his prefaces, "he esteems it to be the greatest work that ever he has published, or ever hopes to do for the use of the churches." Dr. Rippon adds, "they had not long appeared at the bar of the public, before the general voice (with one or two illustrious exceptions) pronounced a flattering verdict on them—a verdict the wisdom and justice of which have now been sanctioned by the *imprimatur*, I had almost said, of half a world."*

One of the above exceptions was the Rev. Thomas Bradbury; an independent minister of eminence; who, though he at first encouraged that design, afterwards animadverted very severely on its execution; but he was a gentleman singular in his taste; and among other eccentricities would never suffer his clerk to sing a triple time tune, which he humourously used to call "a long leg and a short one." Mr. Bradbury, greatly preferring a *translation* to an *imitation* of the Psalms, was satisfied with singing the bald version of Dr. Patrick to his dying day.

Our author's plan and method of interpretation are fully stated in his preface to the first editions of his Paraphrase, and in his Essay on the "Improvement of Psalmody," which is "An Inquiry how the Psalms of David ought to be translated into Christian Songs, and how lawful and necessary it is to compose other Hymns according to the clearer Revelations of the Gospel, for the Use of the Christian Church."

Various opinions have been formed of the Doctor's Psalms and Hymns. Those ministers who think that the words of the inspired penman, or rather a literal translation of them, alone ought to be sung in public worship, of course decline the use of Dr. Watts. The established churches of England and Scotland still adhere to this plan of a close version, and we believe most of the protestant churches on the continent. But those who are offended with the freedom assumed by our author should recollect that he pre-

Cleaving the gloom, the fair celestial light,
Softens and gilds the horrors of the storm
And richest cordials to the heart conveys.

O glorious solace of immense distress,
A conscience and a God! A friend at home,
And better friend on high! This is my rock
Of firm support, my shield of sure defence
Against infernal arrows. Rise, my soul,
Put on thy courage. Here's the living spring
Of joys divinely sweet and ever new,
A peaceful conscience, and a smiling heav'n.

* Sermon before the Society for Promoting Religious Knowledge, preached Nov. 17, 1802, p. 41.

sented to the world, not a *version*, but an *imitation* of the Psalms; a kind of paraphrase, in which, of course, the author's private judgment of the intention of the sacred writer would be given, except in those psalms, the application of which to the Messiah is justified by the New Testament writers.

The general opinion, however, of both the Psalms and Hymns, best appears from their adoption by millions of christians in this and other countries, whose devotions have been animated by that strain of evangelical piety which distinguishes them, and which has given a superiority, in that part of worship, to congregations where they have been employed, above others, where the dull and flat stanzas of Sternhold and Hopkins are yet continued. If, however, good men are still of opinion that a literal translation is most appropriate to the worship of God, they would do well to encourage the best poets to try their skill in versifying a corrected translation of David's sacred odes.

Of the comparative merits of the Hymns and Psalms, considered as poetic compositions, different estimates have been formed. If the former excel in vigour of imagination and originality, it must be remembered that the latter were a paraphrase, and, as such, necessarily restricted by the text. A little more variety was, however, admitted in the measures, and some elevation was certainly derived from the sublimity of the inspired text.*

It could not have been later than this period that the Doctor composed his Divine and Moral Songs for Children, which have been the delight of infant minds from that day to the present, and probably will be for ages to come. They have received honourable mention from the pen of Dr. Johnson, and high encomiums from Dr. Gibbons and innumerable others. A pious Welsh divine says, "I have seen the sweet delight and joy with which they have been read by many of the young. On the hearts of five children in my own connexions they have, by the blessing of God, made deep impressions; and one of these the other day died comfortably, repeating them within a few minutes before his departure." A thousand such testimonies might be produced; but the following instance of the conversion of a mother by their means is still more striking:—A poor wretched girl, religiously educated, but now abandoned to misery and want with an illegitimate child, was struck with horror at hearing this infant daughter repeat, so soon as she could well speak, some of the profane language she had taught her by example. She trembled at the thought that she was not only going to hell herself, but leading her child thither. She instantly resolved, that the first sixpence she could procure should purchase Watts's Divine Songs, of which she had some recollection, to teach her infant daughter. She did so, and on opening the book, her eye caught the following striking stanza:

> "Just as the tree cut down, that falls
> To north or southward, there it lies:
> So man departs to heaven or hell,
> Fix'd in the state wherein he dies."

She read on—the event was her conversion, and she lived and died an honourable professor of religion.

* To Dr. Watts's successful exertions in sacred poetry, we probably owe the praiseworthy efforts of his successors in the same useful department, who, though they have not equalled him, have nevertheless contributed much to the edification of the christian world: We refer especially to the productions of Doddridge, Wesley, Miss Steele, Newton, and perhaps Cowper himself.

It is impossible to calculate the number which has been dispersed of these humble compositions; but we have authority for saying, that by two societies alone (the Society for Promoting Religious Knowledge among the Poor, and the Religious Tract Society) more than 100,000 have been circulated—that not less than thirty editions are kept in print in England only, and that the annual circulation in this country considerably exceeds 50,000, besides the multitudes printed in Wales, Scotland, and America.

During the first years of his ministry, Mr. Watts delivered a series of discourses to a number of young persons, who associated for prayer in the vestry of his meeting-house. These were afterwards, and probably during his long confinement, corrected and arranged in a little volume called A GUIDE TO PRAYER,* in which the subject is scientifically considered, and we are taught to pray by rule without a form, as a middle way to avoid the incoherence and incorrectness which had been complained of in extemporary prayer, without the mind being fettered with the strictness of a liturgy. Readers will think differently of this work, according to their respective systems; but all must own that the author's method was judicious, and that his directions are full of piety and wisdom.

In 1720 Mr. Watts published his ART OF READING,† at present one of the least valuable of his works, as some of the rules are become obsolete, and every thing valuable has been copied into some or other of the numerous spelling-books which have succeeded during almost another century. The plan of this little book was laid, as himself informs us, in his long illness. While confined from public work, and kindly nursed in the family of Sir Thomas, he compiled it for the use of his daughters, the three Miss Abneys; and when, a few years afterwards, this amiable family instituted a charity school at Cheshunt, the work was finished and published for their use.

The next year (1721) our divine engaged in more important labours, and published the first volume of his SERMONS,§ the occasion of which himself explains. His repeated afflictions had very much circumscribed his public labours. For a long time he was unable to preach at all, and when he did it was with such weakness and pain, that after preaching he was often obliged to retire to bed, and have the room closed in darkness and silence; and as he was incapacitated for public labour, so he was for the more private duties of his pastoral office, such as visiting his flock at their habitations, and conversing with them. This filled him with anxiety and regret, and induced him to present his people with a volume of discourses from the press, that they might read in their families the same truths, which they had heard with so much pleasure from his lips.

In reviewing these discourses it may be justly remarked, that they possess uncommon excellence, and in some respects, notwithstanding the many volumes of sermons since published, have never been exceeded, or even equalled. The beautiful perspicuity and simplicity of their style renders them familiar to the meanest capacities. Their originality of thought, and the happy illustrations that abound in them, discover the genius of the writer; but the fervour of his exhortations, his close addresses to the conscience, and the rich veins of evangelical truth and christian experience in every discourse, shew the christian divine in full proportion. The only thing that can be justly objected to is, that they contain redundancies of expression, and some slight inaccuracies, not exactly conformable to the critical taste of the present age. It is to be remembered, however, that they were written or revised in the chamber of sickness; many of them perhaps with an

* See Vol. III. † See Vol. IV. § See Vol. I.

aching head, and a trembling hand. If they do not, in general, smell of the lamp of study so much as some productions of the present age, they partake more of the holy unction of the gospel.

As to the delivery of these discourses in the pulpit, Mr. Watts, in part, read them; not confining himself wholly to his notes, but amplifying, or altering, as he found inclination or occasion, and that with the utmost ease and freedom.* In a few instances he confessed himself a little daunted when he saw men of the first literary eminence before him; but he recovered himself, he says, when he recollected the words of the Lord to Jeremiah, "Fear not their faces, lest I confound thee before them."

He used very little action; but in the art of pronunciation, Dr. Johnson (from the information of his friend Hawkesworth) preferred his delivery to that of the celebrated Dr. Foster. It is probable, at least, that it was better adapted to the gravity of the pulpit, and it is certain that his discourses were far more evangelical. In prayer he was remarkably distinct, perspicuous, and solemn. It is particularly remarked, that Mr. Watts, both in prayer and preaching, frequently paused to give his hearers the better opportunity of understanding and recollection. This indeed does not accord with the rules of Greek and Roman orators, who addressed rather the passions than the understanding, and whose object was to bear down all opposition, like a mighty torrent. The gospel, however, being designed to produce more important and permanent effects, disowns and renounces this species of eloquence, and founds all the duties of our religion on a knowledge of its leading principles. It does, indeed, address the passions, but it is through the understanding; and bears down opposition, not by the force of oratory, but of evidence.

In 1722 our author published his excellent "Discourses upon Death and Heaven," which had been preached on the death of good Sir John Hartopp and his Lady.† If in these sermons we meet with some conjectures on the employment of heaven, not expressly sanctioned by the scriptures, let them be treated as the conjectures of a christian philosopher and a saint, who had himself stood long upon the verge of eternity, and looked farther, perhaps, within the veil, than any of us can pretend to do. The celebrated professor Frank was so pleased with these discourses, that he procured a translation into the German language, and his successor, Dr. Rambach, wrote a recommendation of them in very strong and emphatic language.

But the principal work of this year was the "Christian Doctrine of the Trinity,"‖ which, without departing from the received opinions on that subject, affords perhaps the best scriptural view, and the ablest defence of that doctrine ever written. It is true, that our divine does not enter into the peculiar systems of the Nicene or Anti-Nicene

* It cannot be supposed that the Doctor was much in the habit of reading his sermons, for he gives the following advice to ministers in his "Humble Attempt," Sect. III. "Get the substance of your sermon which you have prepared for the pulpit, so wrought into your head and heart by review and meditation, that you may have it at command, and speak to your hearers with freedom; not as if you were reading or repeating your lesson to them, but as a man sent to teach and persuade them to faith and holiness. Deliver your discourses to the people like a man that is talking to them in good earnest about their most important concerns, and their everlasting welfare; like a messenger sent from heaven who would fain save sinners from hell, and allure souls to God and happiness. Do not indulge that lazy way of reading over your prepared paper, as a schoolboy does an oration out of Livy or Cicero, who has no concern in the things he speaks: But let all the warmest zeal for God, and compassion for perishing men, animate your voice and countenance, and let the people see and feel, as well as hear, that you are speaking to them about things of infinite moment, and in which your own eternal interest lies as well as theirs."

† See Vol. II. ‖ See Vol. VI.

fathers; but he produces the evidence of the inspired writers arranged in a series of propositions, which demonstrate the great leading features of this doctrine with an evidence little short of mathematical, to those who admit the supreme authority of revelation. In one chapter indeed he refers to "the pre-existence of Christ's human soul," as an idea that he thought would much elucidate the many obscure texts; but does by no means insist on it, as in some of his subsequent publications; and, this excepted, there is, perhaps, no passage that can justly offend the most orthodox reader.

In the next year (1723) appeared a *second* volume of Sermons,* on the Christian Morals, which we have no hesitation in preferring to all which have yet appeared upon these topics. The very subject is indeed considered by a certain class of professors as legal, though largely treated in most of our Lord's discourses, and more or less in all the apostolical epistles. Nothing, however, can be more truly evangelical than these discourses. All his morals are founded on the gospel, his motives derived from it, and the doctrine and example of our Redeemer furnish its standard and its measure.†

This was a year of peculiar affliction to our author, in the death of his beloved friend and patron, Sir Thomas Abney, a man of a generous public spirit, and of the most exemplary piety. It was happy, however, for the family to possess among them such a son of consolation; a man who well knew how to pour the balm of the gospel into hearts bleeding with affliction; and it was happy for him that Lady Abney and her daughters possessed minds so congenial with that of the worthy Knight. In short, our amiable author had been long incorporated in the family; and they were all so united in the bonds of christian friendship, that death alone could separate them.

The year 1724 produced his admirable discourse on Logic,‖ which, while it exhibited the true method of reasoning, rejected that wretched system of quibbling and dispute which had hitherto disgraced the schools. It is true, as Dr. Johnson remarks, the great Locke had written upon the subject, and prepared many of the materials; but it was left for Watts to simplify his system, and to reduce it to general use. It was soon introduced into the University of Oxford; and in the year 1741 Bishop Secker assures the author, it was "by no means the only piece of his read there with high esteem."‡ After perusing this work with much attention, the late Lord Barrington calls it a book by which not only the youth of England, but all who are not too lazy or too wise to learn, may be taught to think and write better than they do; and adds, "I intend, as some have done Erasmus, or a piece of Cicero—to read it over once a year. §

The next year produced the "Elements of Geography and Astronomy," which now, through the rapid advances of science, may be numbered among his least important publications; as may also his "Dissertations on the Trinity,"¶ of which the second part was this year printed. When the first were published is not so certain, but we shall defer our remarks on these pieces till we come to consider the Doctor's last sentiments on this subject.

In 1726 appeared his "Defence against the Temptation to Self-Murder;" and in 1728

* See Vol. I.

† Lady Hartford mentions a pleasing instance of the utility of the Doctor's sermons, in the case of a man who had been a bad husband and a drunkard twenty years, but was by reading them converted to a course of life just the reverse of his former conduct.

‖ See Vol. V. ‡ Gibbons, 353, 405. § See Vol. VI. ¶ See Vol. VI.

a useful "Discourse on Charity Schools."* In this last year our author received, unsolicited, and without his knowledge, diplomas from the Universities of Edinburgh and Aberdeen. Dr. Johnson justifies this bestowment of literary honours, and wishes they were always conferred with the same judgment. The only circumstance which needed apology was the delay; that, while so many persons of inferior talents had been thus honoured, a man whose praise had long been in the churches of England and Scotland, of Holland and America, had been so long neglected.

In 1729 the Doctor published a short "Caveat against Infidelity,† and a guard against Apostacy;" and the next year a judicious discourse on the "Composition and Use of Catechisms;‖ but the catechisms themselves, or part of them, must have been previously published, because a second edition of them accompanied these discourses. Dr. Rippon‡ is "pretty certain" that these little formularies were composed at the request of Sir Gilbert Elliott; and it is no small commendation of them, that though perhaps a few words may have been changed to advantage, they have never been equalled, for simplicity and suitableness to the young minds for whom they were composed. For this reason, the first catechism especially has obtained more extensive circulation than any other, except those adopted by the national churches of England and Scotland.

Of these compositions and his "Children's Hymns," Dr. Johnson says, "He condescended to lay aside the scholar, the philosopher, and the wit, to write little poems of devotion, and systems of instruction, adapted to their wants and capacities, from the dawn of reason through its gradations of advance in the morning of life. Every man, acquainted with the common principles of human action, will look with veneration on the writer, who is at one time combating Locke, and at another time making a catechism for children in their fourth year. A voluntary descent from the dignity of science is perhaps the hardest lesson that humility can teach."

"A short View of Scripture History,"§ which, as being written in the form of question and answer, is a kind of sequel to the above, must have followed within a year or two, and is allowed to be, according to Lord Barrington's account of it, "a book very instructive and entertaining to people of all ages and conditions;" at least it is certainly so to the young and uninformed. His lordship promises to keep a copy of it in his own study, as well as to leave it in his "nursery, hall, and parlour."¶

The year 1731 produced two valuable works, the first "An humble Attempt toward the Revival of Practical Religion."** The first part is addressed to ministers, and this part was originally intended to have been delivered at the ordination of Mr. Oakes, at Cheshunt; but the Doctor being at that time confined to a bed of sickness, enlarged and amplified it to its present size, in which it certainly merits the attention of every minister or candidate for the sacred office. The second part was delivered in several discourses to the congregation in Berry-street, from that striking question of our Lord, "What do ye more than others?" From which he considers the peculiar obligations of some christians to eminent piety, arising from their peculiar advantages, and this he applies particularly to the case of protestant dissenters, for whose use the address was primarily intended.

* See Vol. II. † See Vol. IV. ‖ See Vol. III.

‡ Sermon before the Society for Promoting Religious Knowledge, Nov. 17, 1802, p. 11.

§ See Vol. III. ¶ Gibbons, p. 406. ** See Vol. III.

Another production of this year was, his "Essay on the Strength and Weakness of Human Reason." A copy of this work, presented to Dr. Gibson, then Bishop of London, was the occasion of commencing a correspondence between them, which we shall have farther occasion to notice.

In the year 1732 died Miss Elizabeth Abney, one of the daughters of Sir Thomas, for whom the Doctor preached a funeral sermon, afterwards printed in his "World to Come."

The next year produced his "Philosophical Essays on various Subjects;"* to which is added a System of *Ontology*, which has been much admired. In the "Essay on Space," he has been charged with confounding the idea of space and *empty* space; but treating space as an abstract idea, must it not be considered empty? otherwise we confound it with universal being. The most admirable thing, however, in this volume, is the striking lesson of humility he draws from these speculations, by shewing the contracted limits of the human mind, and the uncertainties attending all the deductions of our debased reason, unaided by revelation.

The year following (1734) produced his third volume of Sermons,† and a small volume of Miscellaneous Thoughts, in prose and verse, which he called "Reliquiæ Juveniles.‖ Many of these pieces are highly beautiful; some few are on literary subjects, but the far greater part contain the effusions of piety from the lips of a man of genius. They ought to form part of the library of every young person of taste and seriousness.

Soon after this followed another excellent, though anonymous, little work, called "The Redeemer and Sanctifier;"‡ since, in 1736, Bishop Gibson acknowledges the receipt of this book as a present from the author, and says he had read it "with great satisfaction and delight." He adds, "the seeing so shameful a departure from true christianity on the two points which are the subject of your book, has long been a sensible concern and grief to me, and especially when I see it countenanced and propagated by many who call themselves *christians*, but are in reality little more than deists; for (says he) if the great work of our redemption, and the blessed fruits of it are to be laid aside, I cannot see that the name of christian signifies much." The good Bishop particularly laments this defection among some of the dissenters, who had been, he confesses, hitherto, "without exception, zealous for them."§ This work was written partly in the form of dialogue, and the debate conducted with a good deal of spirit and ingenuity.

To shew how much our author was now esteemed in the literary as well as the religious world, we need only refer to the Gentleman's Magazine. Mr. Cave, the original printer and proprietor, and perhaps the editor of that respectable publication, in order to excite emulation, and procure for his miscellany productions of real genius, proposed to give certain rewards to his poetical correspondents, and wrote to Dr. Watts, requesting him to decide upon their respective merits. His natural modesty revolted at the idea of becoming a literary judge; but, on being pressed, he gave his opinion with so much candour and judicious discrimination, that all parties expressed their gratitude, and cheerfully acquiesced in his decisions.

Anno 1736 was a year of pain and suffering, as we find from one of the pieces in his "Remnants of Time," published since his decease, and which form a proper Appendix to his Miscellaneous Thoughts.

* See Vol. V. † See Vol. I. ‖ See Vol. IV. ‡ See Vol. III. § Gibbons, 360.

" Lord, I am pain'd, but I resign
To thy superior will:
'Tis Grace, 'tis Wisdom all divine
Appoints the pains I feel."

After six other stanzas, equally sweet and pathetic, he concludes with this encouraging idea:

" Is not some smiling hour at hand
With peace upon its wings?
Give it, O God, thy swift command,
With all the joys it brings!"*

Early in the next year the Doctor lost his father, in a good old age, himself being in his sixty-third year, and surrounded with infirmities: His admirable letter to his father, in dying circumstances, will be appended to these Memoirs.

Whether this affliction prepared him for the work we know not; but the next spring (1737) produced his beautiful " Essay on Humility, as exemplified in the character of St. Paul;"† a piece in which his own character, though undesignedly, is displayed in its true colours, and to the best advantage. Bishop Gibson, however, in perusing this admirable Essay, properly enough remarks, there was no occasion to apologize " for descending to the lowest scenes of life; for (adds the prelate, very justly) it is a fault, both in preaching and in writing upon practical subjects, when we keep too much to general reasoning, and do not bring down our doctrines to common life.‖

The year 1738 produced a small " Essay on the Holiness of Times and Places," and the year following an Essay " On Civil Power in Things sacred;"‡ in both which, as might naturally be anticipated, he took the medium between scepticism and superstition, licentiousness and tyranny; and in the latter work the doctrine of Toleration is discussed with great moderation and ability. One of his American correspondents, however, Dr. Colman, of Boston, made some judicious remarks upon the latter publication, which are worthy to be transcribed. " The Essay on Civil Power in Things sacred," says Dr. C. " I take to be your own (though published anonymously) by the preface and two first sections. I think what is said, sect. iii. to be absolutely necessary to the being of a christian state, and that the laws of a land should enjoin, strictly and peremptorily, the worship and swearing by the one and only Lord God; and that they that deny him, and would swear by any idol god, should not be acknowledged as subjects of the state. I cannot think there may be heathens, serving other gods, and yet useful members of a state: They must be dreadful snares and pests to the places where they dwell, and fatal to them, as God warned his Israel of old. I fear also (adds Dr. C.) the appointment and support of preachers of natural religion, and the laws of the land, with a command to people to attend them, and on the Lord's-day in particular, would soon turn out the requisite sanctification of it in private and public. The honour of the Lord's-day, and means of grace, forbids the intrusion of other authorised civil and moral public teachers."

But the most important publication of this year was his " World to Come,"§ already mentioned as containing his funeral sermon for Mrs. S. Abney. The first of these

* See Vol. IV. † See Vol. II. ‖ Gibbons, p. 361. ‡ See Vol. II. & VI. § See Vol. II.

sermons, "On the End of Time," is most invaluable. On this work the above Dr. Colman observes, "I think you never wrote, nor did I ever read, discourses more adapted to young and old, high and low. In such a flame one would wish to expire: I am ready to say on it, It is finished—yet may you live to add more!" Dr. Watts's able and affecting defence of the scripture doctrine of eternal punishment, particularly attracted the notice of Bishop Secker, who characterizes it as written "in a strong and awful, yet compassionate and good-natured manner."*

In this year, if not sooner, appeared the "Essay on the Strength and Weakness of Human Reason," in which he candidly weighs the question of its sufficiency for our salvation. This essay is written in the form of conferences between a christian clergyman and a candid enquiring deist; a third speaker being introduced as moderator. The names of the interlocutors, Pithander, Logisto, and Sophronius, sound barbarous to English ears, and foreign to real life. Dr. Johnson thinks our author was peculiarly unhappy in coining names, though perhaps his censure is too generally expressed. The dispute, as might be expected, is conducted in a very liberal and candid style, but the speeches are rather too long, and a little too formal for a free conversation. The arguments, however, are well supported, and enlivened by some strokes of genteel wit, insomuch that Lady Hartford says, she never read any thing more entertaining or instructive.† In the preface to the second edition, the Doctor informs us the principal objection he had heard was, that his deist does "not argue so strenuously" as persons of that character generally do, but is too soon convinced. The Doctor, however, hopes to be forgiven in representing Logisto as too fair and candid a disputant; though he might easily, as he observes, have "drawn the teazing saw of controversy further," and produced "a wrangling dialogue" more agreeable to the usual practice of disputants, but certainly less valuable to the reader.

In 1739 the Doctor was visited by the celebrated Mr. Whitefield, then in the zenith of his popularity, and just before he embarked the second time for America. The Doctor had heard of him, not only at home, but by a letter from Dr. Colman, of New England; and took this opportunity, in a friendly manner, to caution his young admirer against the dangers of popularity, enthusiasm, and intemperate zeal. This is mentioned in a correspondence between the Doctor and Bishop Gibson, in which the latter complaining of the young apostle, the former replies, "I said many things to warn him of the danger of delusion, and to guard him against the irregularities and imprudencies which youth and zeal might lead him into; and told him plainly, that though I believed him very sincere, and desirous to do good to souls, yet I was not convinced of any extraordinary call he had to some parts of his conduct. And he seemed to take this free discourse in a very candid and modest manner."

Those who knew the disposition of this amiable and popular man, will easily believe the concluding sentence of this paragraph; and those who know how much he afterwards lamented his own intemperance of zeal, in some instances, will regret that the Doctor's good advice was not more closely followed.

The year 1741 produced one of the most important publications, not only of Dr. Watts, but in the English language, the first part of the "Improvement of the Mind,"

* Gibbons, p. 355. † Ibid. p. 374.

which he confesses had been the labour of more than twenty years: The second part was left in MS. and published by the editors of his works.* Dr. Johnson says of this treatise, "Few books have been perused by me with greater pleasure than his 'Improvement of the Mind,' of which the radical principles may indeed be found in Locke's Conduct of the Understanding; but they are so expanded and ramified by Watts, as to confer upon him the merit of a work in the highest degree useful and pleasing. Whoever has the care of instructing others, may be charged with deficiency in his duties if this book is not recommended." †

The "Harmony of all Religions" ‖ appeared in 1742, wherein the author endeavours to shew that true religion is the same under every dispensation since the fall, differing only in the manner and circumstances of revelation. The law being the type, and the gospel the antitype, of our salvation.

About this time, Mr. Toplady informs us ‡ (and he had it from the Countess herself), the Doctor was favoured with a visit from the pious Lady Huntingdon, whom he thus accosted: "Madam, your ladyship is come to see me on a very remarkable day." "Why is this day (said she) so remarkable?" "This day thirty years (replied the Doctor) I came hither, to the house of my good friend, Sir Thomas Abney, intending to spend but one single week under this friendly roof; and I have extended my visit to the length of exactly thirty years." Lady Abney, who was present, immediately addressed the Doctor: "Sir, what you term a long thirty years visit, I consider as the shortest visit my family ever received." "A coalition like this (says Dr. Johnson), a state in which the notions of patronage and dependance were overpowered by the perception of reciprocal benefits, deserves a particular memorial."

In 1745 the Doctor published his "Sermons on the principal Heads of Christian Doctrine." § In addition to what has been already remarked on the Doctor's other Sermons, we may add, that in these discourses, while he discovers the most laudable zeal for the grand essential doctrines of the gospel, he shews the greatest candour, and the most amiable modesty, on inferior points; always urging the importance of revealed truth; but never contending strenuously for his own particular explications.

In the same memorable year appeared Dr. Doddridge's admirable work, entitled, "The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul." The political events of this year are almost forgotten, with the very name of the Pretender, through whose insurrection so much blood was shed; but when shall this work be forgotten? Never while the Christian religion and the English language have existence.

But wherefore connect the name of Doddridge with that of the subject of these Memoirs? Because they are so connected in the history of literature, that while the name of one shall live, the other can never die. As it respects the present work, Dr. Watts has the honour of forming the plan, and suggesting many of the materials; and when complete, he recommended it most cordially to the Christian world.

It may be worthy a remark, that two years previous to this publication, some of Dr. Doddridge's works had found their way into Holland, as those of Dr. Watts had some time before; but Mr. Tinon, the bookseller, of Amsterdam, was afraid to publish them in the Dutch language, without a recommendation from Dr. Watts, as a certificate for

* See Vol. V. † Johnson's Life of Watts. ‖ See Vol. IV. ‡ Gospel Mag. 1776 p.. 41. § See Vol. I.

their orthodoxy; while at the same time, in this country, his own orthodoxy was called in question among many of his brethren!

The year 1746 produced the Doctor's treatise on the "Freedom of the Human Will,"* in which he endeavours to justify a liberty of indifference; and it must be owned he has written with his usual candour and ingenuity: But President Edwards, of America, hath since supported the opposite hypothesis with such prodigious strength of argument, that it is likely, had the Doctor lived to read this masterly treatise of his friend,† his own would have been materially altered. It was certainly the Doctor's design to obviate the infidel objections against the character of God, drawn from the doctrine of necessity; but in doing this it requires, perhaps, more than human skill, to avoid weakening the other attributes of Deity, and to preserve

"A God full orb'd,
In his whole round of attributes complete."

The year following (1747) produced the "Evangelical Discourses,"‖ some of which had been preached many years before; also an "Essay on the Rational Foundation of a Christian Church."‡ There is something so engaging in the manner in which the Doctor treats this subject, that those who differ the most widely from him on the affairs of church government and ecclesiastical discipline, must acknowledge the ingenuity and candour of his statements. His representation of the Lord's Supper as the memorial of a departed friend, has something very endearing in it, without rejecting any other object referred to by this ordinance in scripture.

There are a few other of the Doctor's publications, to which no date can positively be affixed, and which therefore may be mentioned here; such particularly are his "Discourses on the Passions, and on the Love of God."§ The former, in the first edition, was inserted merely as an introduction to the latter; but in the second it was considerably enlarged, and forms a valuable philosophical essay, the best upon the subject in our language. The "Discourses on the Love of God" were also improved and printed separately, as they have been generally since, though often bound together. Their tendency is practical, and their great object, to lead men from "the frigid zone of christianity" (misnamed rational religion) into the warmer region of Divine Love, which is here shewn to be the proper climate of the christian. In the sixth discourse particularly is "the affectionate christian vindicated," and the religion of the gospel shewn to be the religion of the heart. The Doctor proves that christianity not only admits, but demands the warmest of our affections; and that the cool and cautious religionist errs just as far from true reason as from piety.

The Essay on "The Ruin and Recovery of Mankind,"¶ is another publication without date; yet two things may be remarked, that it appeared before his "Orthodoxy and Charity united," and that he lived to publish a second edition of it.

A principal subject of this work is the doctrine of the fall; and in the preface to the second edition he remarks—"I have endeavoured, throughout this whole composure,

* See Vol. VI.

† Dr. Watts, in conjunction with Dr. Guyse, strongly recommended Mr. Edwards's "Narrative of the Revival of Religion in New England."

‖ See Vol. II. ‡ See Vol. VI. § See Vol. II. ¶ See Vol. VI.

to *relieve* and *soften* all the harsher and more obnoxious parts of this doctrine of original sin, and several other articles of our religion dependent upon it; and this I did attempt here and there by some *new* sentiments, which I was sensible must run the risk of severe trial, and bear the test of ancient prejudice. But this freedom of thought seemed to be necessary, where former solutions failed."* Among the new sentiments here referred to, is the "singular opinion," as Doddridge himself calls it, "that the sin of Adam has subjected all his posterity not only to death, but to the utter *extinction of being;* the consequence of which is, that all those who die in their infancy fall into a state of *annihilation*, excepting those who are the seed of God's people, who by virtue of the blessings of the covenant made with Abraham, and the promise to the seed of the righteous, shall, through the grace and power of Christ, obtain part in a happy resurrection, in which other infants shall have no share." †

How far it may be necessary or allowable to "relieve and soften" the apparent harshness of scripture doctrines, admits of considerable doubts. We observe nothing like it in the conduct of St. Paul, who was the great controversialist of the New Testament. He seems rather to delight in bold and strong assertions, on the authority of the Holy Spirit, and this method seems to be most consistent with the scripture plan of humbling sinners, and bringing them as penitents to the footstool of mercy; as well as with that of leading believers to live by faith, and credit the word of God on its own authority, rather than its apparent harmony with our reason. As to the opinion respecting infants, it yields such cold consolation to the heart of a parent, that it will most probably still remain singular. What parent would not rather leave his deceased infant in the hands of God, trusting to his sovereign mercy, ‖ than suppose his future happy existence depended on his own salvation?—an opinion, by the way, which, if minutely traced, would have to combat objections little less formidable than those against the common notions of original sin, which our author, in this "very ingenious" work, as Dr. Doddridge justly calls it, has taken such pains to soften.

"It was not only in his *book*, but in his *mind* also," says Dr. Johnson, "that orthodoxy and charity were united." The great object of this piece, and of the Doctor's life, was to place the doctrines of the fall—the atonement—divine influence—the necessity of repentance, faith, and holiness (which formed his system of orthodoxy), in a point of view consistent with their truth and importance; while he endeavours to lessen the smaller differences among christians respecting inferior points of sentiment, or rather forms of expressions, and to promote charity and forbearance toward one another, The Doctor thought (and who does not think?) that the chief difference between real believers lies rather in terms than things; for we find the same men who wrangle with each other in their sermons or conversation, agree very cordially in their devotions at the throne of grace. Habits of education, and of reading, create these differences in their statements; but when they come before God, under a proper sense of their own vileness, they forget their party shibboleth, and melt down their differences in the sacred fire of scriptural piety. The seventh Essay, "against uncharitableness," should be read and studied by every religious disputant or controversial writer.

To this work is appended an ingenious Essay, entitled "Self-Love and Virtue recon-

* Preface, Vol. VI. † Doddridge's Lectures, Vol. II. p. 216.

‖ See an ingenious pamphlet, lately published, entitled "Infant Salvation."

ciled only by Religion, or an Argument to prove that the only effectual Obligation of Mankind to practise Virtue, depends on the Existence and Will of God;" a piece that merits the high commendation it has received.

We now come to the Doctor's more obnoxious publications on the Trinitarian controversy; and to enquire particularly what were his last sentiments on this important subject.

Dr. Watts studied the doctrine of the Trinity, as some Indian devotees are said to have contemplated the sun, till their own sight was darkened. The Doctor had read upon all sides of the question, was grieved at the angry spirit in which the controversy was conducted, and imagined, good man! that it was possible to reconcile contending parties by some modest and candid statements. "It is my opinion," said he, "that a fair, easy, and intelligible scheme of the Trinitarian doctrine, agreeable to holy scripture, would be the noblest and the securest guard against the Arian and Socinian errors, for then there would be no pretence to deny it." This may be true; but the question is, who shall draw up this "easy and intelligible scheme" of a doctrine, on all hands confessed to be a most sublime and incomprehensible mystery? What was the Doctor's success, with certainly the best qualifications for such an attempt, we shall now proceed to enquire.

It has been already hinted, that he discovered his peculiarity of sentiment respecting the pre-existence of Christ's human soul (which laid the foundation of his future system), in his treatise on the Doctrine of the Trinity, first published in the year 1722; at which time, it appears by a note on that passage, that the first part of his Dissertations was then *written;* though we are not able to state exactly at what period it was published.

The first Dissertation is entitled, "The Arian invited to the Orthodox Faith," in which the Doctor attempts to lead him, by "a plain and easy method," into "the *proper* deity of Christ." This he does, in the first instance, by a string of queries founded on his "Christian Doctrine" just mentioned, which certainly place the arguments for the proper divinity of Jesus in a very striking point of view. He then introduces his hypothesis of the pre-existence of Christ's human soul, prior to the creation of all things; supposes a personal union to take place between this glorious created Spirit and the Supreme Divinity, in consequence of which the sublime works of creation and providence are attributed to this complex person—the God-man—the Son of God: And from this divine union he derives the efficacy of his atonement and satisfaction for mankind. In the second Dissertation, the author pursues the Socratic method (for which he was eminently qualified) to shew the possibility of such a union between the divine and human natures, and its consistency with reason, in which he argues with great shrewdness and perspicuity. In the third Dissertation, he justly considers the worship of Christ as founded on his godhead, and very ably proves that no mere creature, however highly exalted, can be made the object of religious worship without idolatry. Here ends the first part of the Dissertations. In the preface to the second part of his Dissertations, he first avows his strong attachment to the *indwelling scheme*, which, it seems, ascribes the Godhead of Jesus to his union with the Divine nature, and not to his being a distinct person in that nature, as Trinitarians generally speak; for in this preface he confesses he was before engaged in no one particular scheme: "I thought (says he) the general doctrine of scripture was plain and evident, but as to the *modus* of it, I was much in doubt." About this time, however, Mr. Tomkins, an ingenious writer of the Arian cast, attacked our author's

book, in "A sober Appeal to a Turk or an Indian," and *drove* him, as he says, to adopt the hypothesis above mentioned.

It is certainly no part of the biographer's office to defend or refute the peculiar tenets of the subject of his memoir; yet, as in writing the life of a general or a statesman, it is expected that some attention should be paid to his schemes and plans for the public good, so in the life of an author an impartial account of his writings should be given, with the same freedom of remark as in the other cases.

How far it may be necessary to adopt any human explication of this divine mystery, may be seriously doubted; but, surely, the Doctor was under no necessity to recur to this particular hypothesis, which is no more without its difficulties than the more commonly received opinion; and this circumstance it would not be justice, to our *young* reader especially, to conceal.

As to the pre-existence of Christ's human soul, however convenient it may be to account for some circumstances, as his appearance under a human form, &c. it is very difficult to conceive how he could be the *second* Adam, the son of our first progenitor, if in his human nature he was formed before him. If the soul be the chief part of the Man, as we usually consider it, then very imperfectly, and by a strong figure only, can he be the *Son* of Man!

As to the necessity of the pre-existence of Christ's human soul, to form a party in the covenant of grace, if we admit any distinctions in the Divine Being sufficient to warrant the use of the personal pronouns *we* and *us*—*I*, *thou*, and *he*—which are common and frequent throughout both Testaments of Scripture—that is surely sufficient to admit the idea of a covenant between those parties; and if there be a difficulty in conceiving the human nature to be pledged to such engagements, especially to sufferings and death before it was called into existence, there is no less difficulty in the contrary supposition; for a creature could not be at liberty to refuse the suggestions of the Divine Will: The moment that it is made known to a perfect creature, he must acquiesce in it.

Another strong objection to this hypothesis, or at least to the use made of it by Dr. Watts is, that it inverts the Scripture economy. *There*, we find the human nature of our Lord first obeying, suffering, dying; and then, in consequence, raised to the throne of glory: But this scheme represents his human soul, immediately on its existence, endued with divine powers to create and govern the world; and becoming of course, in its union with the Deity, the object of religious adoration. Afterwards, indeed, this exalted spirit is supposed to stoop so low as to assume a body, an essential part surely of human nature, and necessary to its perfection! And it is not easy to conceive how it could be an act of great humility for one who was properly a servant (because a creature) of however high rank, to assume a servant's form; but it is a much greater difficulty to explain how Jesus could be exalted to new and superior honours, if indeed his human soul had been employed, as this hypothesis supposes, as the Creator and Governor of the Universe!

As to the distinction between a real, modal, or scriptural Trinity, it is too metaphysical for Christianity, which was intended for the simplest of the common people; and, probably, it would puzzle the most acute philosophers to define a medium between real and modal. That hypothesis, however, which represents the human nature as united to the Divine, without personal distinction, supposes the Father

himself incarnate, subject to sufferings and death; and confounds the distinction between the sacred Three.

The doctrine of the Trinity is not founded on a few detached passages of scripture. It is woven into the constitution of the sacred language of the Old Testament; and in the New, though not systematically defined, it is constantly implied, and in many places sufficiently expressed, as the Doctor has largely shewn, though he has weakened the force of his own argument by reducing the doctrine to little more than a trinity of names.*

The preface to the second part of these Dissertations is dated in May 1725; and the following are the subjects herein discussed: First, the sentiments of Jews and Christians relative to the WORD or LOGOS. This, numbering from the former Dissertations, is called the fourth, and contains a great deal of curious learning, and favours the pre-existence of Christ's human spirit; but as it is chiefly collected from human writers, and those the most mystical and obscure, is not very important to our subject. The fifth Dissertation enquires into the scriptural doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and sufficiently proves, what no judicious Trinitarian would controvert, that this name is often used impersonally for the gifts and graces of the Spirit conferred on men. Sometimes, however, the Doctor candidly confesses (as in that contested passage, 1 *John* v. 7.) the Father, the Word, and the Spirit "are represented personally" for they are called "three witnesses, or three *persons* bearing witness." The sixth Dissertation considers, however, the precise sense in which the term *person* is used in scripture, and ought to be used in this controversy.

Here our author properly remarks, that "the distinctive character of a person is the application of the personal pronouns *I, thou, he;*" and these "three pronouns being frequently applied in scripture to the Father and the Son, and the pronoun *he* to the blessed Spirit, we therefore call them *three persons.*"† But then he goes on to shew that we do not take the word *person* exactly in the same sense, and include precisely the same ideas, as when we call three men, or three angels, three distinct persons.‖ All this is certainly just, and admitted by the most orthodox Trinitarians. Dr. Hopkins, of America, in his "Body of Divinity," says, "It is thought that the use of the above-mentioned personal epithets (I, thou, he, &c.) is a sufficient warrant to distinguish the Three in the Divine Trinity by the word *person.* But it must be carefully observed, that when this word is applied to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as three distinct persons, it does not import the same distinction which is expressed by it when applied to men. It means nothing inconsistent with the highest perfection, or with these THREE being really and perfectly ONE God. Nor is it pretended, that this word, when used in this instance, can be so defined as to give any clear and adequate idea of a subject so mysterious, and infinitely incomprehensible."

So far we seem agreed; but what then do we mean by distinguishing three persons in one Divine Essence?—Simply this; that there is such a distinction as that, while we maintain each of the Divine Persons to be truly God, and equally entitled to divine

* Those who wish to see what some of Dr. Watts's pious and learned contemporaries thought of his Trinitarian writings, may perruse Dr. Abraham Taylor's "Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity vindicated, in opposition to Mr. Watts's scheme of one Divine Person, and two divine powers." Mr. Hurrion, also, a very able writer, published a set of discourses entitled "The Scripture Doctrine of the proper Divinity, real Personality, &c. of the Holy Spirit, stated and defended."

† See Vol. VI. ‖ Ibid.

honours, yet certain things may be predicated or denied of the one, which cannot be so of the others; thus, for instance, the Father is impassible—the Son incarnate—the Spirit sent by both; and this distinction is sufficient also to attribute to each a distinct œconomical character; the Father elects—the Son redeems—the Spirit sanctifies.

But if, as the Doctor attempts afterward to shew, the word *person* is more strictly applicable to the Father, and in a more lax and figurative sense to the Son and Spirit, so that in fact, as he sometimes expresses it, the Deity consists of one divine philosophical person, and two divine powers (analogous to the mind and will in man) then the Father (for instance) may be said to have become incarnate with as much propriety as the Son; and all the acts of the Son may be attributed to the Father, as justly as the acts and determinations of the mind and will may be attributed to the man himself; and this seems to be a millstone about the neck of this hypothesis, from which nothing can disentangle it.

In these remarks we have anticipated the substance of the seventh and last Dissertation, and shall only give a few extracts from the conclusion. "Far be it from me," says this amiable divine, "to assert this explication of the Trinity with any positive airs, or in assured language: All that I aim at is, to gain and give as clear and distinct ideas as I can of the words which the Scripture uses, that, as far as possible in explaining the word of God, I might secure myself and others from talking without ideas." This modest paragraph is sufficient to shew that our author had nothing of the character of a *heretic* about him. Err he might, and probably, did; but he never discovered a desire to form a party—to make a division in the church—or to exalt himself. His fault seems to lie in the vain hope of penetrating within the veil that human weakness has drawn over this and many other divine mysteries. Systems of divinity, like other systems in science, have their use, and should not be rashly ridiculed or condemned. But if they are deduced from Scripture only, as certainly they should be, they must have their blanks. For, as in drawing maps of this terrestrial globe, there are many parts which must be marked *terra incognita*, or unknown countries; so, in a system of Bible Theology, there are many parts which can only be filled up by conjecture, and are therefore best left blank. Or, we may borrow an illustration from the sister science of the stars: Our astronomers have covered the celestial globe with the monsters of imagination, and as they have enlarged their discoveries, have planted them with almost innumerable stars; yet still there are many void spaces in the celestial concave, and probably will be so till another state supplies us with superior modes of discovery.

To apply these illustrations to the subject before us. We have the outlines of this doctrine in the Scriptures, drawn in strong and bold characters. We know that the same infinite nature, and the same divine honours, are ascribed to Father, Son, and Spirit—and yet that to each are ascribed distinct works and characters; we therefore conclude that these three divine persons must be God—and *one* God, because revelation plainly enjoins us to worship one God alone. But if we go farther, to enquire into the *modus* of the Divine Being, all systems fail us, and we are lost in clouds and darkness; even that hypothesis, on which the Doctor too much flattered himself, becomes as obscure and unintelligible as the most vulgar notion.

These difficulties were no doubt strongly felt by our author, and occasioned the final paragraph of this work, with which we shall close our review of his Dissertations, cordially uniting in his concluding sentiment.

" After all, I am free to declare that I am not so fond of any particular hypothesis, but I shall be ready to relinquish it for another, that will afford a better interpretation of all the scriptures that relate to the blessed Three, and a happier solution of all the objections that have been raised against this article. I should rejoice to see so clear and bright an explication of it arise in the Christian world, as shall overcome and scatter all the difficulties and darknesses that have hitherto hung about it; and shall set it in so divine and triumphant a light, as shall penetrate every soul, diffuse universal conviction, and demand a ready and unshaken assent. But, perhaps, it is above the privilege of a mortal state, to expect the accomplishment of such a wish. In the mean while, let us pay the homage of our understandings to the Supreme Incomprehensive, by firmly believing what God has plainly revealed, and wait for the favours of higher illumination in the regions of light and immortality. Amen."*

The " Useful and important Questions concerning Jesus the Son of God" are dated 1746†, and may properly be noticed here. In great measure they go over the same ground with the Dissertations; but the main point laboured is, to shew that the term " Son of God" does not expressly relate to his Deity, but to his mediatorial character and miraculous conception. On this head the Doctor is by no means singular. Many eminent divines, and, of late, all those of the Hutchinsonian school, maintain the same. The sacred student should however know, that although it is certain Jesus was declared to be the Son of God, both in regard to his incarnation and resurrection, there are many passages which seem to imply that he was so in a much superior sense, and that his sonship implied his divinity,‖—or, which is the same thing, his equality with God the Father.

That the divinity of Jesus was not so clearly taught by himself as by his apostles, if true, may easily be accounted for; because he did not seek his own honour, but upon the most important occasions. It is also, however, certain that his apostles before the death of their Master were but slow in apprehending his instructions on these, as on other subjects; but nothing can be inferred hence against the importance of this truth, unless we would also infer, that the doctrine of his sufferings for our sins was equally unimportant.

To these " important questions" is subjoined a short " Essay on the true Importance of Human Schemes to explain the sacred Trinity,‡ in which our author shews, that " no such scheme of explication is necessary to salvation;" that it may, however, be " of great use to the church;" but that such explications ought to be proposed with modesty to the world, and never imposed upon the conscience.

As to the doctrine itself, whatever God has clearly revealed is certainly important, and the perspicuity of the revelation will generally be found in proportion to its intrinsic moment. But truth is important to us only as it affects the heart and life. The scriptures rest the importance of this doctrine on the due rendering divine honours to the sacred Three; and, in particular, to the Son of God, whose humiliation being

* See Vol. VI. † See Palmer's Life of Watts, p. 51.

‖ See John v. 18. Heb. vii. 8, &c. The reader may see some modest but judicious remarks on this subject, in the late Rev. Mr. Newton's *Messiah*, Sermon XXVII. See also Dr. Ridgley's Body of Divinity.

‡ See Vol. VI.

extreme, peculiar care is taken to secure his glory; and the Father hath committed the great work of judging the world into his hands expressly for this end—*that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.* While, therefore, we honour the Divine Persons by a life of holy obedience and communion, trusting our salvation to the Saviour alone, and daily imploring the agency of his Holy Spirit, we can hardly depart far from the essential doctrines of the gospel. But the danger of speculation is, that it is apt to lead us from the plainest and most important truths, to enquiries more curious than they are useful; though on different minds this effect may be produced in various degrees: Dr. Watts is, perhaps, an instance almost singular, of a christian preserving close and daily communion with God in the midst of the most abstruse theological enquiries.

Under the second head of enquiry the Doctor exclaims, "If it were possible (and such is avowedly the Doctor's aim) to exhibit a scheme of explication which should be so plain, so easy, so agreeable to the light of nature, and yet so happily correspondent with scripture as to captivate the assent of learned and unlearned at the very proposal of it, what a glorious advantage would the church of Christ obtain toward its unity and peace!"* Alas, good man! this flattering reverie proceeds upon a principle, which never has been realized, that the doctrines of christianity want only to be clearly stated, in order to be universally received; whereas it is certain from the scriptures (as the Doctor himself acknowledges) that the fault lies in the corruption of human nature. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; neither indeed can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned;* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

Nor does it appear to be the design of Providence to represent the doctrines of the gospel with that overpowering evidence which is here supposed. Our life, in the present state, is a life of faith; we are to receive the truths of revelation upon the authority of the Revealer, and not because they are "plain, easy, and agreeable to the light of nature."

As to the last question, whether it be lawful to impose any human explication of the doctrine upon our fellow-christians, if it refer to an imposition attended with penalties on their refusal, there can be no dispute; but how far we have a right to name the terms of communion with our fellow-christians, is a question of more delicacy, and with which we shall not interfere.

The last piece published by the Doctor on this subject, and probably his very last piece, is entitled, "The Glory of Christ as God-man, displayed in three Discourses;" to which is added, "An Abridgment of Dr. Goodwin's Discourse of the Glories and Royalties of Christ." In this discourse our author produces, more at large, the arguments in favour of his darling scheme of the pre-existence of Christ's human soul, which also, it seems, was maintained by Dr. Thomas Goodwin and some other eminent divines, without departing (it should seem) from the usual Trinitarian doctrine. This it does not necessarily reject; though it so far smooths the way to what is called "the indwelling scheme," that of late years, few, perhaps, have embraced the one without sliding into the other.

For the sake of our young readers, we have shewn that this hypothesis is not without

* See Vol. VI.

its difficulties; those who have leisure to pursue the enquiry farther, we refer to the piece before us on the one hand, and to the authors in the margin on the other.*

In order to conclude this subject, and that we may not have occasion to recur to it again, we may observe, that there is another paper, printed in the fourth volume of his works, entitled, "A solemn Address to the great and ever-blessed God," prefixed to some papers on the "Trinitarian Controversy," which (say his executors) it was not judged necessary to publish. These papers, Mr. Palmer informs us, on the authority of an eye-witness, contained nothing new, but some farther thoughts in confirmation of the Doctor's former writings.

A living writer, however, under the name of Gabriel Watts, (but no relation, we believe, to the Doctor's family,) has lately pretended to give us the very papers which were suppressed, from a printed copy, of which he renders the following account. The tract is entitled "A faithful Enquiry after the ancient and original Doctrine of the Trinity, taught by Christ and his Apostles;" the copy from which this was printed (he says) was found in a bookseller's shop in Southampton, in 1796, with the author's name (Isaac Watts, D. D.) and the date (1745) WRITTEN at the bottom of the title-page. In a blank leaf of this book was also *written* the following note: "The doctor printed off only fifty copies of this work, and shewed them to some friends, who all persuaded him that it would ruin his character in his old age, for publishing such dotages, and at length he was prevailed on to burn them; so that the whole impression of fifty was destroyed without publication, except this single copy of it, which by an accident escaped the flames."

This curious note, written nobody knows by whom or when, has however some gross inconsistencies attached to it. The pamphlet is dated 1745; but in 1746 and in 1747 the Doctor published his "Questions relative to the Son of God," and his treatise "on the Glory of Christ as God-man," which we have just reviewed, and in which the very same sentiments are advanced; but why suppress the one in 1745, and immediately after publish the same opinions in two other works? For, upon comparing this pamphlet with the others, it appears that he had incorporated the substance of this imperfect tract (for it is but the first part of a work after all) into his other publications with considerable enlargements. For instance, What is said in the enquiry (§ v.) about the title *Son of God*, will be found in the "Important Questions" much enlarged, and the same passages of Scripture quoted and explained.† So also what is said of the Holy Spirit will appear, on examination, little more than an abridgement of his fifth Dissertation published above twenty years before. Why then burn this tract, which is but a slight sketch of the controversy, and preserve the treatises in which the same principles are at large defended?

But here arises another difficulty. Mr. Gabriel Watts more than insinuates‖ that these are the very papers left in *manuscript*,‡ which the executors declined to publish. If they were, it fully exonerates them; for Mr. Watts allows that to those "acquainted with his (the Doctor's) other essays on the Trinity, it exhibits *little* of a speculative

* Dr. A. Taylor's Scriptural Doctrine of the Trinity; Mr. John Hurrion's Scriptural Doctrine of the proper Divinity, &c.; President Edwards's Miscellaneous Observations, Part 3.

† See Vol. VI. ‖ Preface, p. vi.

‡ In the list of MSS. by his executors, a piece under exactly the same title is marked No. VII. which demonstrates the existence of such a work. See Palmer's Life of Watts, Appendix.

nature which is entirely *new*."* But how is it that this tract should be found in MS. if actually printed by the Doctor three years before his death? Why preserve a manuscript already printed, and carefully destroy the printed copies?

In short, the probability is, that this may be the tract suppressed, and that some officious disciple of the Doctor's procured a copy and printed it, either without his consent, or subsequent to his death; and on that account, as well as from its being the first part only of a work, which he probably intended as an *abridgment* of his other writings on the subject, it was judiciously suppressed. The *address*, however, prefixed to this paper is so curious and interesting, that we shall here insert it, and then take our final leave of this subject, with a few observations.

A SOLEMN ADDRESS TO THE GREAT AND BLESSED GOD.

"RIGHTEOUS art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee; yet I may talk with thee concerning thy judgments." Permit me, O my God and Father, to plead with thee concerning the revelations of thy nature and thy grace, which are made in thy gospel; and let me do it with all that humble reverence, and that holy awe of thy majesty, which becomes a creature in the presence of his God.

Hast thou not, O Lord God Almighty, hast thou not transacted thy divine and important affairs among men by thy Son Jesus Christ, and by thy Holy Spirit? And hast thou not ordained that men should transact their highest and most momentous concerns with thee, by thy Son and by thy Spirit? Hast thou not, by the mouth of thy Son Jesus, required all that profess his religion to be washed with water in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost? Is it not my duty then, to enquire, who or what are these sacred names, and what they signify? Must I not "know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ thy Son, whom thou hast sent," that I may fulfil all my respective duties towards thyself and thy Son, in hope of eternal life? Hath not thy Son himself appealed to thee in his last prayer, that eternal life depends upon this knowledge? And since thou hast made so much use of thy Holy Spirit in our religion, must I not have some knowledge of this thy Spirit also, that I may pay thee all those honours thou requirest from this divine revelation?

Hast thou not ascribed divine names and titles, and characters to thy Son and thy Holy Spirit in thy word, as well as assumed them to thyself? And hast thou not appointed to them such glorious offices as cannot be executed without something of Divinity or true Godhead in them? And yet art not thou, and thou alone, the True God? How shall a poor weak creature be able to adjust and reconcile these *clashing* ideas, and to understand this mystery? Or must I believe and act *blindfold*, without understanding?

Holy Father, thou knowest how firmly I believe, with all my soul, whatsoever thou hast plainly written and revealed in thy word. I believe Thee to be the only true God, the Supreme of Beings, self-sufficient for thine own existence, and for all thy infinite affairs and transactions among creatures. I believe thy Son Jesus Christ to be all-sufficient for the glorious work of mediation between God and man, to which thou

* Preface to Gabriel Watts, p. vii.

hast appointed him. I believe he is a man, "in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," I believe he is one with God; he is God manifested in the flesh; and that the man Jesus is so closely and inseparably united with the true and eternal Godhead, as to become one person, even as the human soul and body make one man. I believe that this illustrious Person is hereby possessed of divine dignity, sufficient to make full atonement for the sins of men by his sufferings and death, even though sin be accounted an infinite evil; and that he hath all-sufficient power to raise himself from the dead, to ascend to heaven, and fulfil the blessed works for which thou hast exalted him, and to govern and judge the world in thine appointed time.

I believe also thy blessed Spirit hath almighty power and influence to do all thy will, to instruct men effectually in divine truths, to change the hearts of fallen mankind from sin to holiness, to carry on thy work of illumination, sanctification, and consolation on the souls of all thy children, and to bring them safe to the heavenly world. I yield myself up joyfully and thankfully to this method of thy salvation, as it is revealed in thy gospel. But I acknowledge my darkness still. I want to have this wonderful doctrine of the all-sufficiency of thy Son, and thy Spirit, for these divine works made a little plainer. May not thy humble creature be permitted to know what share they can have in thy Deity? Is it a vain and sinful curiosity to desire to have this article set in such a light, as may not diminish the eternal glory of the Unity of the True God, nor of the supremacy of thee the Father of All?

Hadst thou informed me, Gracious Father, in any place of thy word, that this divine doctrine is not to be understood by men, and yet they were required to believe it, I would have subdued all my curiosity to faith, and submitted my wandering and doubtful imaginations, as far as possible, to the holy and wise determinations of thy word. But I cannot find thou hast any where forbid me to understand it, or to make these enquiries. My conscience is the best natural light thou hast put within me, and since thou hast given me the scriptures, my own conscience bids me search the scriptures to find out truth and eternal life. It bids me try all things, and hold fast that which is good. And thy own word, by the same expressions, encourages this holy practice. I have, therefore, been long searching into this divine doctrine, that I may pay thee due honour with understanding. Surely I ought to know the God whom I worship, whether he be one pure and simple Being, or whether thou art a threefold Deity, consisting of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Dear and Blessed God, hadst thou been pleased, in any one plain scripture, to have informed me which of the different opinions, about the Holy Trinity, among the contending parties of christians had been true, thou knowest with how much zeal, satisfaction, and joy, my unbiassed heart would have opened itself to receive and embrace the divine discovery. Hadst thou told me plainly, in any single text, that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are three real distinct persons in thy divine nature, I had never suffered myself to be bewildered in so many doubts, nor embarrassed with so many strong fears of assenting to the mere inventions of men, instead of divine doctrine; but I should have humbly and immediately accepted thy words, so far as it was possible for me to understand them, as the only rule of my faith. Or hadst thou been pleased so to express and include this proposition in the several scattered parts of thy book, from whence my reason and conscience might with ease find out, and with certainty infer his doctrine, I

should have joyfully employed all my reasoning powers, with their utmost skill and activity, to have found out this inference, and ingrafted it into my soul.

Thou hast taught me, Holy Father, by thy prophets, that the way of holiness, in the times of the gospel, or under the kingdom of the Messiah, shall be a highway, a plain and easy path; so that the wayfaring man, or the stranger, *though a fool, shall not err therein.* And thou hast called the poor and the ignorant, the mean and the foolish things of this world, to the knowledge of thyself and thy Son, and taught them to receive and partake of the salvation which thou hast provided. But how can such weak creatures ever take in so *strange*, so difficult, and so abstruse a doctrine as this; in the explication and defence whereof, multitudes of men, even men of learning and piety, have lost themselves in infinite subtilties of dispute, and endless mazes of darkness? And can this strange and *perplexing* notion of three real persons going to *make up* one true God, be so necessary and so important a part of that christian doctrine, which, in the Old Testament and the New, is represented as so plain and so easy even to the meanest understandings?

O thou Searcher of Hearts, who knowest all things, I appeal to thee concerning the sincerity of my enquiries into these discoveries of thy word. Thou knowest me, thou hast seen me, and hast tried my heart towards thee: If there be any lurking hypocrisy in my heart, any secret bias towards any thing but truth, uncover it, O Father of Lights, and banish it from my soul for ever. If thine eye discovers the *least spark* of criminal prejudice in any corner of my soul, extinguish it utterly, that I may not be led astray from the truth, in matters of such importance, by the least glance of error or mistake.

Thou art witness, O my God, with what diligence, with what constancy and care, I have read and searched thy holy word; how early and late, by night and by day, I have been making these enquiries. How fervently have I been seeking thee on my bended knees, and directing my humble addresses to thee, to enlighten my darkness, and to shew me the meaning of thy word, that I may learn what I must believe, and what I must practise with regard to this doctrine, in order to please thee, and obtain eternal life!

Great God! who seest all things, thou hast beheld what busy temptations have been often fluttering about my heart, to call it off from these laborious and difficult enquiries, and to give up thy word and thy gospel as an unintelligible book, and betake myself to the light of nature and reason; but thou hast been pleased by thy divine power to scatter these temptations, and fix my heart and hope again upon that Saviour and that eternal life, which thou hast revealed in thy word, and proposed therein, to our knowledge and our acceptance. Blessed be the name of my God, that has not suffered me to abandon the gospel of his Son Jesus! And blessed be that Holy Spirit that has kept me attentive to the truth delivered in thy gospel, and inclined me to wait longer in my search of these divine truths, under the hope of thy gracious illumination.

I humbly call thee to witness, O my God, what a holy jealousy I ever wear about my heart, lest I should do the slightest dishonour to thy supreme majesty in any of my enquiries or determinations. Thou seest what a religious fear, and what a tender solicitude I maintain on my soul, lest I should think or speak any think to diminish the grandeurs and honours of thy Son Jesus, my dear Mediator, to whom I owe my everlasting hopes. Thou knowest how much afraid I am of speaking one word, which may be construed into a neglect of thy blessed Spirit, from whom I hope I am daily receiving happy influences of light and strength. Guard all the motions of my mind, O Almighty God,

against every thing that borders upon these dangers. Forbid my thoughts to indulge, and forbid my pen to write one word, that should sink those grand ideas which belong to thyself, or thy Son, or thy Holy Spirit. Forbid it, O my God, that ever I should be so unhappy as to unglorify my Father, my Saviour, or my Sanctifier, in any of my sentiments or expressions concerning them.

Blessed and faithful God, hast thou not promised that *the meek thou wilt guide in judgment, the meek thou wilt teach thy way?* Hast thou not told us by Isaiah thy prophet, that thou *wilt bring the blind by a way which they knew not, and wilt lead them in paths which they have not known?* Hast thou not informed us, by thy prophet Hosea, that *if we follow on to know the Lord, then we shall know him?* Hath not thy Son, our Saviour, assured us, that our *Heavenly Father will give his Holy Spirit to them who ask him?* And is he not appointed to *guide us into all truth?* Have I not sought the gracious guidance of thy good Spirit continually? Am I not truly sensible of my own darkness and weakness, my dangerous prejudices on every side, and my utter insufficiency for my own conduct? Wilt thou leave such a poor creature, bewildered among a thousand perplexities, which are raised by the various opinions and contrivances of men to explain thy divine truth?

Help me, Heavenly Father, for I am *quite tired* and weary of these human explainings, so various and uncertain. When wilt thou explain it to me thyself, O my God, by the secret and certain dictates of thy Spirit, according to the intimations of thy word? Nor let any pride of reason, nor any affectation of novelty, nor any criminal bias whatsoever, turn my heart aside from hearkening to these divine dictates of thy word and thy Spirit. Suffer not any of my native corruptions, nor the vanity of my imagination, to cast a mist over my eyes, while I am searching after the knowledge of thy mind and will, for my eternal salvation.

I entreat, O most merciful Father, that thou wilt not suffer the remnant of my short life to be wasted in such *endless wanderings*, in quest of thee and thy Son Jesus, as *a great part of my past days* have been; but let my sincere endeavours to know thee, in all the ways whereby thou hast discovered thyself in thy word, be crowned with such success, that my soul being established in every needful truth by thy Holy Spirit, I may spend my remaining life according to the rules of thy gospel; and may, with all the holy and happy creation, ascribe glory and honour, wisdom and power, to thee, who sittest upon the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever,

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Many things here mentioned are already animadverted upon as they occur in our author's previous writings, we shall add two or three additional observations.

1. The Doctor seems to suppose that it is the office of the Holy Spirit, not only to lead into the essential truths of the gospel, which are indeed so plain that "he who runs may read;" but also into its higher and more philosophical principles. On this point, however, we may observe, that while the Spirit of God leads the humble christian into all *the truth*, so far as it is important to his salvation, he never encourages idle or presumptuous curiosity. Job, it should seem, erred on this head, in attempting to push his enquiries too far into the mysteries of Divine Providence; and he was silenced, not by an explication of his difficulties, but by being reproved for his presumption: *Who is this*

that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? When Daniel, after being favoured with extraordinary prophetic revelations, which he heard but understood not, said, *O my Lord, what shall the end of these things be?* he received for answer, *Go thy way, Daniel—Go thy way till the end be: For thou shalt rest and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.* When Paul was taken up into the third heaven, he was permitted to make no discoveries; and though John was allowed to write his sublime visions, it was in language so enigmatical, as only to be understood when they are fulfilled. We are taught to live by faith, and not by sight, in the present imperfect state.

2. Our good Doctor seems to have imbibed too much the spirit and language of holy Job in this respect also, when he justifies himself rather than his Maker. Assuming, perhaps, rather too confidently, his own integrity and purity of intention, he thence infers the certainty of divine direction; whereas many reasons may be given to justify the wisdom and goodness of God in not granting his request; especially as perfect knowledge is the privilege of the heavenly state; *What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter.*

3. It appears that our author was by no means settled and confident in his own opinions. After so many years earnest enquiry after truth, he was yet a learner; and near the close of his long and studious life lamented that "a great part of his days" had been "wasted in endless wanderings, in quest" of satisfaction on this subject. No great encouragement by the way for others, in this respect, to imitate his conduct; although in other respects so bright an exemplar of christian graces.

4. It is clear, however, the Doctor never degenerated into the Arian or Socinian systems, though his opinions have been supposed to lead toward them. But little before his death, and while he was attacked by the Trinitarians, he also sustained a controversy with Mr. Tomkins, who laboured much to draw him into Arianism;* but though the Doctor certainly departed from the common hypothesis, nothing could induce him to give up the Deity or the worship of Jesus Christ; or to suppress those ascriptions of praise to the divine Trinity in his doxologies, notwithstanding he might think some of them rather incautiously, because unscripturally, expressed.†

We cannot, perhaps, conclude this subject more properly than by adverting to some lines, which the Doctor in his early days had written upon the great Mr. Locke, who before his death, was supposed to have indulged some dangerous speculations, partly also on the same subject.

* Palmer's Life of Watts, Appendix. Beside Mr. Tomkins's "Sober Appeal to a Turk or an Indian," he also published "A calm Enquiry whether we have any Warrant from Scripture to address ourselves in a Way of Prayer or Praise to the Holy Spirit," on which Dr. Watts wrote animadversions: of these Mr. Palmer gives a specimen, but they were never wholly printed.

† There is one respect, in which it seems the Doctor wished to have introduced some alterations. Dr. Amory related to Mr. Palmer a conversation between Mr. Henry Grove and Dr. Watts, in which Mr. Grove remarked, that several of the Doctor's Hymns appeared rather to lay the stress of our salvation on the compassion of Christ than on the love of God. The Doctor seems to have admitted this, but lamented, that, having sold the copyright, it was not in his power to make alterations. This applies, however, only to a few expressions, which a small share of poetical licence is sufficient to account for. The report raised of his having prepared an edition of his hymns altered to the Arian or Socinian standard, is certainly without foundation. See Palmer's Life of Watts, p. 27, note.

" Sister of Faith, fair Charity,
Shew me the wond'rous man on high,
Tell how he sees the Godhead, Three in One:
The bright conviction fills his eye,
His noblest pow'rs in deep prostration lie,
At the mysterious throne.

" Forgive," he cries, " ye saints below,
The wav'ring and the cold assent
I gave to themes divinely true:
Can you admit the blessed to repent?
Eternal darkness veil the lines
Of that unhappy book;
Where glimmering reason with false lustre shines,
Where the mere mortal pen mistook
What the celestial meant!"*

In applying these lines of our author to some of his own writings, we do not mean to insinuate (as he does of Mr. Locke) that it is needful " to invoke charity, that by her help" we may " find him out in heaven;" the scenes to which we are now proceeding, as well as the whole tenour of his life, preclude the possibility of doubt on that subject.

Having now bid adieu to the Doctor as an author, we return with him to the scenes of private life, and find him in the same happy and pious family to which his illness providentially introduced him in 1712, and where he finished his days, after six and thirty years abode. Sir Thomas, we have observed, was soon taken from him, but his excellent relict, who was " a widow indeed," survived the Doctor about a year. " A coalition like this," says Dr. Johnson, " a state in which the notions of patronage and dependance were overpowered by the perception of reciprocal benefits, deserves a particular memorial."

In adverting to the Doctor's private life, which has been yet but very slightly noticed, we must take a retrospective view. The delicacy of his constitution, and repeated sicknesses soon brought upon him the infirmities of age; yet the goodness of God, and the kind attention of his friends preserved his feeble frame to a good old age; and though the taper of life burned slowly to the socket, its flame was brilliant to the last. In health he was remarkable for vivacity in conversation, and for ready wit; though he never shewed a fondness for displaying it, especially in satire, to which his amiable temper was naturally averse. " Wit fell from him," says Dr. Gibbons, " like occasional fire from heaven; and like the ethereal flame was ever vivid and penetrating."† His long and repeated illnesses gave him little opportunity for visiting; but whenever he went into families, he filled his pockets with hymns and catechisms, and where he was known and expected, the young people flocked around him to receive them.

In early life it has been said that an attachment was formed between our divine and the pious and amiable Miss Singer, afterwards Mrs. Rowe; if this was ever any thing more than a Platonic passion, which is doubtful, it certainly subsided into a pure and sincere friendship—in consequence of which that lady, at her death, committed her papers to his care. It is probable, however, that his frequent afflictions prevented him from seriously thinking of altering his condition, and after his kind reception into the Abney family, it became the less desirable.

* Hor. Lyr. Bk. II.

† Gibbons's Life of Watts, p. 162.

A few interesting anecdotes of the Doctor may here be properly introduced. He was low of stature,* (but about five feet,) and his bodily presence was weak; yet there was a certain dignity in his countenance, and such piercing expression in his eyes, as commanded attention and awe. Being once in a coffee-room with some friends, he overheard a gentleman asking, rather contemptuously, "What, is that the great Dr. Watts?" and turning round suddenly, and in good humour, repeated a stanza from his Lyric Poems, which produced a silent admiration:

"Were I so tall to reach the pole,
Or grasp the ocean with my span,
I must be measured by my soul:
The mind's the standard of the man."†

Dr. Gibbons informs us that, like other men of genius, our author was a dabbler in the mimic arts, and copied some antiques that shewed him master of his pencil. Of course he was an admirer of Raphael's Cartons; and once, on being shewn that which represents St. Paul preaching at Athens, he exclaimed, "I'll tell you what he is saying, *Behold he cometh!* and were we to think as long as we will (says Dr. Gibbons), we could not perhaps conceive any words more suitable to the aspect and attitude of the speaker, and the solemnity reigning upon the countenances of the hearers."‖

By the way we may remark, that as the great apostle of the gentiles is reported to have been a little man, of similar stature and appearance with our author, so it was his opinion that St. Paul's infirmities were also similar to his own; for his biographer tells us, that the Doctor explained "the thorn in the flesh," to be a state of nervous debility, such as he was himself latterly afflicted with to a remarkable degree.‡

As the Doctor was free and cheerful in conversation, so his remarks were constantly directed to some valuable end. On his last visit to his father at Southampton, a servant in the family was ordered to accompany him a day's journey homeward. On this occasion, the Doctor entered into such a serious discourse with him as was the means of his conversion, and Richard Ellcock (such was his name) lived and died an honourable christian.

The Doctor was blessed with a retentive memory. Dr. Gibbons mentions hearing him readily repeat in conversation, in the latter part of his life, several verses from Juvenal, though he had never read them since he was a young man.§

We have remarked, that in his latter days he was a good deal engaged in controversy. Flattered on the one hand by innumerable admirers, and on the other teased by the envy and jealousy of his rivals in popularity, his delicate mind, naturally irritable and shattered by sickness, must have very sensibly felt his situation; though, it is said, Lady Abney kept from him, as much as possible, every thing she thought calculated to give

* His stature was beneath the common standard, perhaps not above five feet, or at most five feet two inches, but without any thing like deformity in his frame. His body was spare and lean, his face oval, his nose acquiline, his complexion fair and pale, his forehead low, his cheek bones rather prominent, but his countenance on the whole by no means disagreeable, his eyes were small and grey, and whenever he was attentive or eager, amazingly piercing and expressive, his voice was rather too fine and slender, at least it would have been thought so, if he had been of a larger mould, but it was regular, audible, and pleasant. Dr. Gibbons, p. 322.

† Hor. Lyr. False Greatness. ‖ Gibbons's Life of Watts, page 161. ‡ Ibid. 157. § Ibid. 323. N.

him uneasiness. It was indeed the Doctor's own disposition, not to pain a worm, but to sympathize with every feeling of human nature; and though his means of benevolence were small, his income not exceeding one hundred pounds per annum, yet one-third of it he constantly disposed of in charity, and offered to decline his salary when he found himself no longer able to fulfil his public service.

The account of his last illness and death cannot be given better than in the words of his friend, Dr. Gibbons, and his faithful servant and amanuensis, Mr. Joseph Parker.

"It is a glory (says our author in one of his discourses) to the gospel, when we can lie down with courage in hope of its promised blessings. It is an honour to our common faith, when it overcomes the terrors of death, and raises the christian to a song of triumph in the view of the last enemy. It is a new crown put upon the head of our Redeemer, and a living cordial put into the hands of mourning friends in our dying hour, when we can take our leave of them with holy fortitude, rejoicing in the salvation of Christ. No sooner does he call but we are ready, and can answer with holy transport, Lord, I come."

"What the Doctor so justly and properly describes, that he himself exemplified in his last hours. As his day of life was eminently bright and useful, so its setting was remarkably serene and happy. His weakness was such as greatly to interrupt him in the pursuit of his studies, though not so great as to deprive him of his intellects, or to leave him to any strange chimeras of fancy, which I have frequently, heard, but without any kind of ground attributed to him.* He saw his approaching dissolution with a mind perfectly calm and composed, without the least alarm or dismay, and I never could discover, though I was frequently with him, the least shadow of a doubt as to his future everlasting happiness, or any thing that looked like an unwillingness to die. How have I known him recite with a self-application those words in Heb. x 36. *Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye may receive the promise?* And how have I heard him, upon leaving the family after supper and withdrawing to rest, declare with the sweetest composure, that if his Master were to say to him he had no more work for him to do, he should be glad to be dismissed that night? And I once heard him say with a kind of impatience, perhaps such as might in some degree trespass upon that submission we ought at all times to pay to the divine will, "I wonder why the great God should continue me in life, when I am incapable of performing him any further service." He has been heard to say, "I bless God I can lie down with comfort at night, not being solicitous whether I awake in this world or another."

* We are happy in being able, from the best authority, to contradict those idle tales so frequently told and so generally believed of the Doctor's nervous fancies, as they are called. We copy Dr. Gibbons's testimony on this head:

"How it came to pass I know not, but that it has so happened is certain, that reports have been raised, propagated, and currently believed concerning the Doctor, that he has imagined such things concerning himself, as would prove, if they were true, that he sometimes lost possession of himself, or suffered a momentary eclipse of his intellectual faculties, and I could refer my reader to a biographer who gives the world a grave narrative of the particulars of these wild reveries. But I take upon me, and feel myself happy to aver that these reports were utterly and absolutely false and groundless; and I do this from my own knowledge and observation of him for several years, and some of them the years of his decay, when he was at the weakest; from the express declaration of Mr. Joseph Parker his amanuensis for above twenty years, and who was in a manner ever with him; and above all from that of Mrs. Elizabeth Abney, the surviving daughter of Sir Thomas and Lady Abney, who lived in the same family with him all the time of the Doctor's residence there, a period of no less than thirty-six years. Can any evidence be more convincing and decisive?"

Again, " I should be glad to read more, yet not in order to be confirmed more in the truth of the Christian religion, or in the truth of its promises; for I believe them enough to venture an eternity upon them." When he was almost worn out and broken down by his infirmities he observed, in conversation with a friend, " that he remembered an aged minister used to say, that the most learned and knowing christians, when they come to die, have only the same plain promises of the gospel for their support, as the common and unlearned; and so, said he, I find it. They are the plain promises of the gospel which are my support, and I bless God they are plain promises, which do not require much labour or pains to understand them; for I can do nothing now but look into my Bible for some promise to support me, and live upon that." When he has found his spirit tending to impatience, and ready to complain, he would thus check himself, " The business of a Christian is to bear the will of God as well as to do it. If I were in health I could only be doing that, and that I may do now. The best thing in obedience is a regard to the will of God, and the way to that is, to get our inclinations and aversions as much mortified as we can."

" I visited the Doctor on his death-bed* (says his biographer) where I found him exceedingly weak and low, the lamp of life very feebly glimmering in its last decay, but he was still in the perfect possession of his understanding. He told me in answer to my inquiry whether he had any pain in his body, that he had none, and acknowledged it as a great mercy. To my second question, how was it with his soul, whether all was comfortable there, he replied it was, and confessed it to be a great mercy. Mr. Joseph Parker, a person of most respectable character, and the Doctor's amanuensis, as has been before mentioned, for about one-and-twenty years, sent the following intelligence concerning him, to his brother at Southampton, but the day before his death, November 24, 1748.

" I wrote to you by the last post that we apprehended my master very near his end, and that we thought it not possible he should be alive when the letter reached your hands; and it will no doubt greatly surprise you to hear that he still lives. We ourselves are amazed at it. He passed through the last night in the main quiet and easy, but for five hours would receive nothing within his lips. I was down in his chamber early in the morning, and found him quite sensible. I begged he would be pleased to take a little liquid to moisten his mouth, and he received at my hand three tea-spoonfuls, and has done the like several times this day. Upon inquiry he told me he lay easy, and his mind peaceful and serene. I said to him this morning that he had taught us how to live, and was teaching us how to die by his patience and composure, for he has been remarkably in this frame for several days past. He replied, " Yes." I told him I hoped he experienced the comfort of these words, " I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." He answered, " I do." The ease of body and calmness of mind which he enjoys is a great mercy to him and to us. His sick chamber has nothing terrifying in it. He is an upright man, and I doubt not but his end will be peace. We are ready to use the words of Job and say, " We shall seek him in the morning but he shall not be." But

* Dr. Gibbons, page 316, directly contradicts the story relating to a visit paid by the Rev. Geo. Whitefield to Dr. Watts just before his death, and the conversation said to have passed on that occasion. Dr. Gibbons says, " Mr. Whitefield never visited the Doctor in his last illness, nor had any conversation with him for some months before his decease."

God only knows, by whose power he is upheld in life, and for wise purposes no doubt. He told me he liked I should be with him. All other business is put off, and I am in the house night and day. I would administer all the relief that is in my power. He is worthy of all that can be done for him. My lady sends her compliments, and am your very faithful and truly afflicted servant,—*Joseph Parker.*"

On the 26th of November, the day after the Doctor's decease, Mr. Parker again wrote to the same person.

"At length the fatal news is come. The spirit of the good man, my dear master, took its flight from the body to worlds unseen and joys unknown yesterday in the afternoon, without a struggle or a groan. My Lady Abney, and Mrs. Abney, are supported as well as we can reasonably expect. It is a house of mourning and tears, for I have told you before now, that we all attended upon him and served him from a principle of love and esteem. May God forgive us all that we have improved no more by him, while we enjoyed him!"

Thus did this great and good man, after an eminently holy and useful life, finish his course with joy, and the last sight of him to the eye of faith was not unlike that which the corporeal eye of Elisha had of Elijah, when he ascended in triumph to the heavenly glory.

Dr. Watts was very honourably interred among the worthies in Bunhill Fields, his pall being borne by six ministers, two from each of the three principal denominations among the protestant dissenters,* presbyterians, independents, and antipedobaptists. Dr. S. Chandler delivered the oration at the grave,† and Dr. Jennings preached the funeral sermon from Heb. xi. 4. *He being dead, yet speaketh.* Several other sermons were preached on the same occasion in different parts of the kingdom, but we shall give an extract only from that of Dr. Jennings, who from personal knowledge was well qualified to delineate our author's character.

"Though that which gave him the most remarkable pre-eminence was the extent and sublimity of his imagination, yet how few have excelled, or even equalled him, in quickness of apprehension and solidity of judgment? And having also a faithful memory to retain what he collected from the labours of others, he was able to pay it back again with a large increase. I question whether any author before him, did ever appear on such

* Dr. Grosvenor was one of these, and on his return a friend thus accosted him; "Well, Doctor! you have seen the end of Dr. Watts, and must soon follow him: What think you of death?"—"Think of it!" replied he, "When death comes, I shall smile on him, if God smile on me."

† Dr. Samuel Chandler in the oration at the grave, delivered the following just commendation of the deceased: "We here commit to the ground the venerable remains of one, who being intrusted with many excellent talents by him who is the giver of every good and perfect gift, cheerfully and unwearicdly employed them as a faithful steward of the manifold grace of God in his Master's service, approving himself as a minister of Christ in much patience, in afflictions, and distresses, by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the armour of righteousness, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report, and who, amidst trials from within and from without, was continued by the kind providence of God, and the powerful supports of his grace to a good old age, honoured and beloved by all parties, retaining his usefulness till he had just finished his course, and being at last favoured, according to his own wishes and prayers, with a release from the labours of life into that peaceful state of good men, which commences immediately after death. O how delightful is that voice from heaven which has thus pronounced, *Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works follow them.*"

a variety of subjects as he has done, both as a prose writer and a poet. However, this I may venture to say, there is no man now living, of whose works so many have been dispersed, both at home and abroad, that are in such constant use, and translated into such a variety of languages; many of which will, I doubt not, remain more durable monuments of his great talents than any representation I can make of them, though it were to be engraven on pillars of brass." In addition to this encomium on his character as an ingenious man and a scholar, he considers him in the more exalted light of a christian, (" the highest style of man,") and instances in the various christian virtues and graces which distinguished him.

Dr. Gibbons and Mr. Palmer have both enlarged upon the features of the Doctor's character, but, as we have given a full-length portrait in the history of his life and actions, we shall only add the masterly sketches of two writers of the first literary rank, and who being both members of that establishment from which he conscientiously dissented, could have no temptation to partiality.

Dr. Samuel Johnson says, " Few men have left behind them such purity of character, or such monuments of laborious piety. He has provided instruction for all ages, from those who are lisping their first lessons to the enlightened readers of Malebranche and Locke; he has left neither corporeal nor spiritual nature unexamined; he has taught the art of reasoning and the science of the stars. His character, therefore, must be formed from the multiplicity and diversity of his attainments, rather than from any single performance; for it would not be safe to claim for him the highest rank in any single denomination of literary dignity; yet perhaps there was nothing in which he would not have excelled, if he had not divided his powers to different pursuits."

Here the Doctor enters into a critique upon our author's poetry, which has already been cited, with some animadversions, and concludes as follows: " He is at least one of the few poets with whom youth and ignorance may be safely pleased; and happy will be that reader whose mind is disposed by his verses or his prose, to imitate him in all but his *Nonconformity;* to copy his benevolence to man, and his reverence to God."*

While there is something meanly depreciating in the idea that " youth and ignorance" may be pleased with the poetry of Watts, there is a strong censure implied upon his brother poets, for there are " few"—very few indeed—" with whom youth and ignorance may be *safely* pleased." But the reflection in the last paragraph upon his *Nonconformity* is so evidently out of place, that one would wonder how even Johnson, with all his prejudices, should have introduced it. Thus much is evident, that Dr. Watts's character, like that of the prophet Daniel, was so singularly irreproachable that, except in a matter of conscience, nothing could be alleged against him.†

* Lives of the Poets, Vol. IV.

† We cannot pass over this uneandid insinuation of Dr. Johnson, without a remark. This we shall borrow from the Rev. S. Palmer, in the Life of Dr. Watts by Dr. Johnson with Notes, &c.

" Is not this exception a striking proof of Dr. Johnson's bigoted attachment to the national established mode of worship? " Reverence to God (or rather *for* God) and benevolence to man," are the two grand essentials of religion. He that possesses these is a true christian, whatever be the external mode of worship which he adopts. Neither his Conformity nor his Nonconformity will exclude him from the divine favour, nor ought it to be matter of censure to his fellow-creatures. If a man, in uniting with any christian community, appears to follow the dictates of his own conscience, and to act conformably to his principles, he deserves the esteem of all parties, and

The encomium of another eminent literary character, Dr. Vicessimus Knox, is far more liberal. "For my own part," says he, "I cannot but think this good man approached as nearly to christian perfection as any mortal ever did in this sublunary state; and therefore I consider him as a better interpreter of the christian doctrine than the most learned critics, who, proud of their reason and their learning, despised or neglected the very life and soul of christianity, the living, everlasting gospel, the supernatural influence of divine grace; and be it ever remembered, that Dr. Watts was a man who studied the abstrusest sciences, and was as well qualified to become a verbal critic, or a logical disputant on the scriptures, as the most learned among the Doctors of the Sorbonne, or the greatest proficients in polemical divinity. I mention this circumstance for the consideration of those who insinuate that the doctrines of grace cannot be entertained but by ignorant, as well as fanatical persons; by persons uninitiated in the mysteries of philosophy."*

After perusing these panegyrics it may be thought we should have followed such examples, and not have marked our author's frailty by our observations. This, however, is not according to the example of the sacred penmen; nor does it answer the grand end of biography, which is to exhibit models within human imitation; not that we should copy blemishes, but they convince us that the model is not inimitable. They serve us also as waymarks to caution us against those errors into which the greatest and best of men have been betrayed.

Anticipating the partial eulogium of his friends, the Doctor had provided for his tomb the following modest inscription with the date of his dissolution, which was engraved on it at the joint expence of his kind friends, Sir J. Hartopp and Lady Abney.

to object to his peculiarity of religious profession, is the mark of a little mind.—That Dr. Watts was conscientious in his Nonconformity there can be no doubt. Dr. Johnson acknowledges that 'any denomination of christians would have been glad to have received him.' If he could have conformed to the national church, doubtless he might have had preferment in it equal to what some of his fellow-students obtained. He neither had, nor could he expect any such emoluments among the dissenters. On what principle then could he 'resolve to take his lot with them' but that of CONSCIENCE? If he had complied with the terms of Conformity while he thought them unlawful, he had violated his conscience, and lost his integrity. Was not his Nonconformity then laudable?

"Supposing him to be mistaken in his judgment of the matters in debate between the Church of England and Dissenters, that 'reverence for God,' which Dr. Johnson acknowledges he possessed, was the very thing which made him a Dissenter. He made the word of God the rule of his faith and practice. He could not submit to human impositions in matters of religion. He dared not yield to such terms of communion as the holy scriptures have not prescribed. His judgment did not approve many things which the Church of England enjoins, and his conscience would not allow him to profess to believe as true what he thought to be false, or to practise as right what he apprehended to be wrong. Why then is he censured for his Nonconformity? And why is it suggested that it would be *unhappy* for any to imitate him in it, though they should be actuated by the same noble principles? An inspired apostle has said, 'Happy is he that condemneth not himself in the thing that he alloweth.' And again, 'This is our rejoicing the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God we have our conversation in the world.' The principal source of *happiness* is 'a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards man.' He that has this must be 'happy,' and he ought to be respected. Dr. Johnson therefore had much better have said, 'Happy indeed is that reader who is disposed by his verses or his prose to imitate him in his impartial enquiry after truth, and in following the dictates of his own conscience, in his reverence towards God and his benevolence to men, whether he be a Conformist or a Nonconformist."

* Christ. Philosophy.

ISAAC WATTS, D.D.

Pastor of a Church of Christ in London, Successor of the Rev. Mr. Joseph Caryl, Dr. John Owen, Mr. David Clarkson, and Dr. Isaac Chauncey, after Fifty Years of feeble Labours in the Gospel, interrupted by Four Years of tiresome Sickness, was at last dismissed to Rest.

November XXV. A.D. MDCCXLVIII. ÆT. LXXV.

2 Cor. v. 8. Absent from the body, present with the LORD.

Col. iii. 4. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, I shall also appear with him in glory.

IN VNO IESV OMNIA.

A few years ago, a small marble monument was erected to his memory in Westminster Abbey; but it is by no means worthy of the illustrious man whom it is intended to honour. We are sorry to add, it is already mutilated by the hand of wantonness. It would be highly creditable to the body of Protestant Dissenters, were they to procure another monument, more worthy of Dr. WATTS, in St. Paul's Cathedral. But the most honourable and the most durable monument of his uncommon worth, we have now the happiness of presenting to the world in his admirable WORKS.

LETTERS

BETWEEN

DR. WATTS AND HIS CORRESPONDENTS.

Mr. Isaac Watts, Sen. (Father of the Doctor) to his Children, when absent through Persecution.

My dear Children,

THOUGH it hath pleased the only wise God to suffer the malice of ungodly men, the enemies of Jesus Christ (and my enemies for his sake) to break out so far against me as to remove me from you in my personal habitation, thereby at once bereaving me of that comfort which I might have hoped for in the enjoyment of my family in peace, and you of that education, which my love as a father and duty as a parent, required me to give; yet such are the longings of my soul for your good and prosperity, especially in spiritual concernments, that I remember you always with myself in my daily addresses to the throne of grace. Though I cannot speak to you, yet I pray for you; and do hope that my God will hear me, and, in due time, bring me to live again amongst you, if he shall see such a mercy fit to be bestowed on me or you. Howsoever, we must endeavour, by patient waiting, to submit to his will without murmuring; and not to think amiss of his chastising us, knowing that all his works are the products of infinite wisdom; his designs are the advancement of his own glory; and his ends towards his people their sanctification and salvation, which shall certainly be accomplished at last, however his great providences may seem contrary to it as to our apprehensions.

My dear children, since in this my absence from you, it is the desire of one of you (that is, my eldest son) to have a line of counsel from his father, I hope he has but mentioned it as the mouth for himself, and the rest of you that are anywise capable of understanding, and that it will be acceptable to you all, and regarded by you; and, therefore, I shall write in general terms to you all that can understand it at present; and to the rest as they grow up to understand it, if you will keep it, or copy it for them; for though I am not altogether without hopes of seeing you again, yet I am nowise certain of it, all our time being in God's hand; but I would have you know that you have yet a father that loves you. I am glad to hear such a desire from any of you; and willing heartily to comply with it, so far as my time and the many disadvantageous circumstances that attend me will permit; which take as followeth:

1st, I charge you frequently to read the holy scriptures; and that not as a task or burden laid on you, but get your hearts to delight in them: There are the only pleasant histories which are certainly true, and greatly profitable; there are abundance of precious promises made to sinners, such as you are by nature; there are sweet invitations and counsels of God and Christ to come in and lay hold of them; there are the choice heavenly sayings and sermons of the Son of God, the blessed prophets, and apostles.

Above all books and writings, account the Bible the best, read it most, and lay up the truths of it in your hearts; therein is revealed the whole will of God for the rule of man's faith and obedience, which he must believe and do, to be holy and happy hereafter. Let all the knowledge and learning you attain by other books, both at school and at home, be improved, as servants to help you the better to understand God's word in all the several tongues wherein you read it. I am the larger upon this head, because therein you may come to know your duty to God and man; and, indeed, the sum of all the counsel I can give you, necessary for the regulating your behaviour towards God and man, in every station, place, and condition of your lives, is contained in that blessed word of God, which pronounceth a blessing to those that read and hear it, and keep the things that are therein written.

2ndly, Consider, seriously and often, of the sinful and miserable estate you are in by nature, from the guilt of original sin, which came in by the fall of our first parents; also of the increasing of that guilt by your own transgressions, and that you are liable to eternal wrath thereupon; also think of the way of fallen man's recovery by grace, according to the foundation principles of the true christian religion, which you have learned in your catechism; and beg of God by prayer, to give understanding in them, and faith to believe in Jesus Christ, and an heart willing to yield obedience to his gospel commands in all things.

Though you cannot tell how to pray as you should do, nor in any order, yet, be not afraid nor ashamed to try. Go aside, my dear children, and think in your minds what it is that you want to make you holy and happy. Tell God that you want pardon of sin, a soft, tender, and sanctified heart, a portion of the Spirit, &c.; and then beg God to help you to pray for those things, and to teach you to pray, and to pardon the iniquities of your prayers. My children though it may want a form of words, yet if the heart be in it, this is prayer, and such a prayer too as God will hear and accept; for he despises not the day of small things, nor little ones; but loves to see them come and tell him what they would have. Tell him you would pray better, but you cannot, till he pleases to help you. My children, if you do but use this way you shall find that in time you will come to have praying gifts and praying graces too; *for to them that ask, it shall be given:* it will be your excellency, your honour, and your great profit to begin betimes to be praying christians. Prayer is the character of a child of God, the best remedy for soul diseases, and the best weapon for a saint's defence! *God will pour out his wrath upon them that call not on his name.*

3dly, Learn to know God according to the discoveries he hath made of himself, in and by his word, in all his glorious attributes and infinite perfections; especially learn to know him in and through the Lord Jesus Christ, and to be acquainted with this blessed Redeemer, of God's elect, who hath paid so great a price as his own blood for the ransom of your souls; thereby satisfying Divine Justice, purchasing peace and reconciliation for sinners. Labour to believe that this was done for your souls; and look upon yourselves bound, as the Lord's redeemed, to walk in all holy conversation and godliness. Know that if Jesus Christ had not come and suffered in the flesh, thereby undertaking and accomplishing the work of Redemption, there had been no remedy; but you must have perished for ever!

4th, Remember that God is your Creator, from whom you received life and being; and as such, you are bound to worship him; much more, when you consider that he is

your benefactor, from the fountain of whose goodness all your mercies come. Now, upon both these accounts, the best of your time and abilities are required in his service; and the earlier you begin to devote yourselves to his service, the abler you will be to perform it acceptably, the greater will be your honour here, and your glory hereafter: though you must not expect to merit aught at his hands, by way of merit for what you can do, yet certain it is, that Jesus Christ will reward every one according to his works; and we are bidden to look to the recompence of reward, in that sense, after Moses's example; and it is no small commendation and honour to be an old disciple of Christ.

5th, Know this, that as you must worship God, so it must be in his own way, with true worship and in a right manner: that is, according to the rules of the gospel, and not according to the inventions or traditions of men. Consider, that idolatry and superstition are both abominable to God. Now idolatry is the worshipping of idols, images, pictures, or any creatures or representations, as the heathens do; or crucifixes and consecrated bread, as the papists do. Either to worship these as God; or to worship God by and under them, as the children of Israel did the molten calf; or to worship God in a false manner—is idolatry; and no idolaters must enter into heaven. Superstition is to make additions of ordinances or ceremonies to God's worship more than he hath appointed, though they have ever so fair pretences for them. Take heed, my children, of these things. It is not enough to say that such things are not forbidden in scripture; but you must see whether they are commanded there, or else obey them not.

6th, Entertain not in your hearts any of the popish doctrines, of having more mediators than one, namely, the Lord Jesus; of praying to the Virgin Mary, or any other saints or angels; for saints and angels, though in heaven, yet they are creatures; and prayer is a divine worship due to none but God the Father, Son, and Spirit: Also avoid their doctrine of meriting by works of obedience; for there is some sin that pollutes our best duties, and we can deserve nothing at God's hand but wrath: All the good we receive comes of his free grace. Their doctrine also of purgatory is abominable; for there is no middle place for souls to go to—there is only heaven and hell: Also, their doctrine that the pope can forgive sins is a lie; for he is a wicked man himself, and must go to hell, unless God forgive him: Also, their turning the bread into the very body of Jesus Christ by a priest's words—this is a falsehood, and notorious idolatry. Many other erroneous and damnable doctrines they own, which I cannot enlarge upon; but you must receive no doctrine, but such as is rightly built upon the holy scriptures. My children, pray to God to give you the knowledge of the truth, and to keep you from error, for it is a very dangerous time you are like to live in.

7th, Do not entertain any hard thoughts of God, or of his ways, because his people are persecuted for them; for Jesus Christ himself was persecuted to death by wicked men, for preaching the truth and doing good; and the holy apostles and prophets were cruelly used for serving God in his own way. The wicked ones of the world are the seed of the serpent; and they will always hate the people of God, torment and seek to destroy them; and God suffers them to do so, not for want of love to his people, but to purge their sins by chastisement; to try their graces and fit them for heaven, till the wicked have filled up the measure of their iniquities, and for many other holy reasons: therefore, if you should come to live very poor, for the gospel's sake, be contented with it, and bless God for every mercy you receive; and know this, that poor ones are heirs of glory as well as rich ones.

Lastly, I charge you to be dutiful and obedient to all yonr superiors—to your grandfather and both grandmothers, and all other relatious and friends that are over you; but, in an especial manner, to your mother, to whose care and government God hath wholly committed you in my absence; who, as I am sure, dearly loves you, so she will command and direct you to her utmost ability, in all ways for your good of soul and body. Consider, she is left alone to bear all the burden of bringing you up; and is, as it were, a widow: her time is filled up with many cares, and therefore do not grieve her by any rebellious or disobedient ways; but be willing to learn of her and be ruled by her, that she may have some comfort in seeing your obedient carriage; and it will rejoice me to hear it. Avoid bad company of wicked children; abhor swearing, lying, and playing on the sabbath-day, and all other wicked courses, so shall you grow in favour with God and man. Love one another. You that are eldest help to teach the younger; and you that are younger, do not scorn the teachings of the elder. These things I charge and command you, with the authority and love of a father. Now, commending you to God, and what I have written to his blessing upon your hearts, through Jesus Christ, with my dear love to your mother, my duty to your grandfather and grandmothers, and love to all other friends, being indifferent in health, I rest your very loving father,

ISAAC WATTS.

London, the 21st of May, 1685.

Mr. Enoch Watts to Dr. Isaac Watts.

Southampton, March, 1700.

DEAR BROTHER,

IN your last, you discovered an inclination to oblige the world by shewing it your Hymns in print; and I heartily wish, as well for the satisfaction of the public as myself, that you were something more than inclinable thereunto; I have frequently importuned you to it before now, and your invention has often furnished you with some modest reply to the contrary, as if what I urged was only the effect of a rash and inconsiderate fondness to a brother; but you will have other thoughts of the matter, when I first assure you that that affection, which is inseparable from our near relationship, would have had in me a very different operation, for instead of pressing you to publish, I should with my last efforts have endeavoured the concealment of them, if my best judgment did not direct me to believe it highly conducing to a general benefit, without the least particular disadvantage to yourself; this latter I need not have mentioned, for I am very confident whoever has the happiness of reading your Hymns (unless he be either sot or atheist) will have a very favourable opinion of their author, so that at the same time you contribute to the universal advantage, you will procure the esteem of men the most judicious and sensible.

In the second place, you may please to consider, how very mean the performers in this kind of poetry appear in the pieces already extant. Some ancient ones I have seen in my time, who flourished in Hopkins and Sternhold's reign; but Mason now reduces this kind of writing to a sort of yawning indifference, and honest Barton chimes us

asleep. There is, therefore, great need of a piece, vigorous and lively as yours, to quicken and revive the dying devotion of the age, to which nothing can afford such assistance as poetry, contrived on purpose to elevate us even above ourselves. To what may we impute the prevalency of the songs, filled with the fabulous divinity of the ancient fathers, on our passions? Is it, think you, only owing to a natural propensity in us to be in love with fable, and averse to truth in her native plainness? I presume it may partly be ascribed to this, that as romance has really more need of artifice than truth to set it off, so it generally has such an abundance more, that it seldom fails of affecting us, by making new and agreeable impressions. Yours now is the old truth, stripped of its ragged ornaments, and appears, if we may say so, younger by ages in a new and fashionable dress, which is commonly tempting.

And as for those modern gentlemen, who have lately exhibited their versions of the psalms; all of them I have not seen I confess, and perhaps it would not be worth while to do it, unless I had a mind to play the critic, which you know is not my talent; but those I have read confess to me a vast deference to yours, though they are done by persons of [no] mean credit. Dr. Patrick most certainly has the report of a very learned man, and they say, understands the Hebrew extremely well, which indeed, capacitates him for a translator, but he is thereby never the more enabled to versify. Tate and Brady still keep near the same pace; I know not what sober beast they ride (one that will be content to carry double) but I am sure it is no Pegasus; there is in them a mighty deficiency of that life and soul, which is necessary to raise our fancies, and kindle and fire our passions; and something or other they have to alledge against the rest of adventurers; but I have been persuaded a great while since, that were David to speak English, he would choose to make use of your style. If what I have said seems to have no weight with you, yet you cannot be ignorant what a load of scandal lies on the Dissenters, only for their imagined aversion to poetry. You remember what Dr. Speed says:

> So far hath schism prevailed, they hate to see
> Our lines and words in couplings to agree,
> It looks too like abhorr'd conformity:
> A hymn so soft, so smooth, so neatly dress'd,
> Savours of human learning, and the beast.

And perhaps it has been thought there were some grounds for his aspersion from the admired poems of Ben Keach, John Bunyan, &c. all flat and dull as they are; nay, I am much out, if the latter has not formerly made much more ravishing music with his hammer and brass kettle.

Now when yours are exposed to the public view, these calumnies will immediately vanish, which methinks should be a motive not the least considerable. And now we are talking of music, I have a crotchet in my brain, which makes me imagine that, as cords and discords equally please heavy-eared people, so the best divine poems will no more inspire the rude and illiterate than the meanest rhymes, which may in some measure give you satisfaction in that fear you discover, *ne in rude vulgus cadant*, and you must allow them to be tasteless to many people, tolerable to some, but to those few who know their beauties, to be very pleasant and desirable; and lastly, if I do not speak reason, I will at present take my leave of you, and only desire you to hear what

your ingenious acquaintance at London say to the point, for I doubt not you have many solicitors there, whose judgments are much more solid than mine. I pray God Almighty have you in his good keeping, and desire you to believe me, my dear brother, your most affectionate kinsman and friend,

ENOCH WATTS.

Dr. Watts to the Church of Christ assembling in Mark Lane.

Feb. 8, 1702.

BELOVED IN OUR LORD,

WHEN you first called me to minister the word of God among you, I took the freedom to acquaint you, that in the chief *doctrines* of christianity I was of the same mind with your former reverend pastor, Dr. John Owen, who being dead yet speaketh; and I have been glad to find, by three years experience, that you retain the same principles that he preached among you. Now, since through your great affection and undeserved respect to me, you have thought fit to call me to the great and solemn office of a pastor, I cannot but take the same freedom to hope, that you are of one mind with him in the chief points of *church discipline.* Though I call no man master upon earth, nor confine my belief to the judgment of another, yet I cannot but own, that, in the study of gospel order, I have found much light and assistance from his works, and from those of your late reverend pastor, Dr. Isaac Chauncy: but being desired by you to give some hints of my principles in writing, in order to future satisfaction, and continuance of peace and love, (if the Lord shall fix me with you) I have here briefly written a few things, whereby you may discover something of my knowledge in the mind and will of Christ concerning his churches.

1. I believe that Jesus Christ, the king of saints, has given command and power to his saints, to form themselves into spiritual societies and corporations, for his public glory, and their own edification.

2. That every society of saints, covenanting to walk with God and one another in all the rules and institutions of the gospel, is a church of Christ.

3. That every such church has power to increase its own number by the addition of members, or to purge itself of corrupt members, before it be organized, and made complete, by having fixed officers among them.

4. That this society of saints ought to look on themselves more nearly united, and related to one another, than to other christians; and consequently to pray with and for each other, to visit one another, to exhort, comfort, and assist one another, and to maintain such a love and communion to and with each other, as that they may look like fellow-members of the same body.

5. The members of such an incomplete church, before any pastor is settled among them, may pray together, and exhort one another; yet this church hath not power in itself to administer all ordinances among them. But when they have chosen a proper officer to be over them in the Lord, and when he is ordained by their public call, his

public acceptance, and by a solemn separation of him to the work by fasting and prayer, then unto the officer is this power committed.

6. It follows thence, that though the pastor be named or chosen to this office by the people, yet his commission and power to administer all divine ordinances is not derived from the people, for they had not this power in themselves; but it proceeds from the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only King of his church, and the principle of all power; and he has appointed in his word, that the call of his church, and solemn ordination, should be the means whereby his ministers are invested with this authority.

7. That in the ordination of a pastor to a particular church, our Lord Christ, as the supreme Governor and Head of his church, sets him in an office of spiritual rule over a willing people, who freely commit themselves to his care; even as Christ also, in and by his word and his providence, now commits them unto his care and charge, of which he must give an account.

8. Hence it follows that pastoral acts, such as teaching, feeding, guiding, and overseeing the flock; exhorting, reproving, comforting them; are not performed in the name of the people, but in the name, stead, and place of Christ, by the pastor, as his representative in that church, and as his ambassador to it; as a shepherd, in ruling, leading, and feeding his flock, acts not in the name of the sheep, but in the name and place of him that owns them, and that has committed them unto his care; and therefore these pastoral acts are to be received by the people, as clothed with the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, so far as they agree with his mind and will according to these scriptures. 2 Cor. v. 20. *Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.* John xiii. 20. *He that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth me.* And this regard is also due to such acts of the pastor from every member, because they have given themselves up to him in the Lord.

9. Yet I believe, that even with regard to these pastoral acts, Christ has given to his churches so far a judgment of discretion, that they are not bound to submit blindly to the government of the pastor, unless he approve himself therein to act according to the will and mind of Christ in his word: And it is the neglect of this consideration that has brought in that unbounded authority, and usurped dominion of the priests, and that implicit faith and blind obedience of the people in the antichristian church.

10. I believe also, that in all those other exercises of church order, which are not merely acts of the pastor, but also acts of the church; such as receiving and casting out members, appointing places of stated or occasional worship, setting apart days of prayer, and times for church meetings; a pastor ought to do nothing without the consent of the people; and though the *whole* office of a pastor herein lies not merely in declaring the mind and consent of the church, yet this is *part* of that business and service that he oweth to the church.

11. That in the admission of members to the church, it is necessary that the people be well satisfied with the person they receive into their fellowship, as well as the pastor to receive him into his care; and that the church has liberty to make objections, if they are dissatisfied with his fitness for church communion: Nor can the pastor receive in any member, or cast out any one, contrary to the mind of the people, or without their actual free consent.

12. I believe, that when the pastor admits a member upon the profession of his faith

and hope, and the satisfaction of the church, he doth, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the consent of the church, receive him into fellowship with Christ, and with that church, in all gospel privileges and ordinances.

13. The duties of a pastor are chiefly such as these; preaching and labouring in the word and doctrine; praying earnestly for his flock in public and private; administering the seals of the covenant of grace, baptism and the Lord's Supper; being instant in season and out of season, teaching and exhorting, comforting and rebuking with all long-suffering and doctrine; contending for, and preserving the truth; approving himself an example to the flock; visiting the sick and the poor; praying with them and taking care of them; making enquiries into the state of his flock, especially as to spiritual affairs; endeavouring to stir up and promote religion in their households and families; and labouring, by all means and methods of Christ's appointment, to further their faith and holiness, their comfort and increase; and it is the duty of the people to attend upon his ministrations, to pray for him, to encourage and support him; and whereinsoever he acts according to the will of Christ, to receive him with all due regard.

14. That it is the proper business of the pastor also, to present persons and cases to the church, and to ask the votes or consent of the church, as one that is set to go before the flock; except when he is necessitated to be absent; or, through any indisposition, incapable when present; or where the pastor himself is so far concerned in the case to be proposed, as may render it improper for him to propose it.

15. For the better performance of all these things, and by reason of the various necessities of a church, other officers are also appointed by Christ, of several names in scripture; especially for churches where the members grow numerous; all whose business is to assist the pastor in those affairs which cannot be fully managed by himself alone, each of them according to their place, office, and business, which the Lord has appointed them unto in his word.

Lastly, That in the management of every affair in the church, there ought to be a spirit of gentleness, meekness, lowliness of mind, love, affection, and tenderness, both in the pastor and people toward each other; for Jesus, the great Shepherd of his church, was most humble and compassionate, most gentle and meek; and his saints were called his sheep from their like dispositions; and that, the edification of the church being one great end for which Christ has given this office to his ministers, all lesser concerns and differences ought to be managed with a continual regard to this great end, and for the public honour of Christ in his churches.

Thus I have given a short account of some of the chief principles of gospel order. If I am so unhappy in any of my expressions to be obscure, and to want explaining, I am ready at any time to declare my meaning, and to give the reasons of my judgment on any of the foregoing articles, shewing that they not only agree with the judgment of your reverend pastors aforenamed, but, which is more considerable, that they are all in my apprehension suitable to the will of Christ, concerning churches and pastors revealed in his word.

Christian friends, dearly beloved, I cannot but tell you, that while I have been writing these articles, especially the 7th, 8th, and 13th, I shrink at the very thoughts of your call of me to so weighty an office in the church of Christ; and I find such discouragements from the awfulness and greatness of the work, that it makes me cry out

feelingly, "Who is sufficient for these things?" And this inclines me still to suspend my answer, and to renew my request to you (though often in vain renewed) of quitting all thoughts of me, and choosing one, whose gifts, graces, and abilities may be more capable of discharging so vast a trust, and filling up the duties of so sacred an office.

Yours in the service of the gospel,

Isaac Watts.

From Dr. Watts to the Rev. Mr. Rosewell, written on the day on which Mr. R. died in the evening.

Dear Brother Rosewell,

YOUR most agreeable and divine conversation two days ago, so sweetly overpowered my spirits, and the most affectionate expressions which you so plentifully bestowed on me, awakened in me so many pleasing sensations, that I seemed a borderer on the heavenly world when I saw you on the confines of heaven, and conversed with you there. Yet I can hardly forbear to ask for your stay on earth, and wish your service in the sanctuary, after you have been so much within view of the glorious invisibilities which the gospel reveals to us. But if that hope fail, yet our better expectations can never fail us. Our anchor enters within the veil, where Jesus, our forerunner, is gone to take our places; *Heb.* vi. ult. May your pains decrease, or your divine joys overpower them! May you never lose sight of the blessed world, and of Jesus the Lord of it, till the storm is passed, and you are safely arrived. And may the same grace prepare me for the same mansions, and give you the pleasure of welcoming to those bright regions

Your affectionate and unworthy

Friend and Brother,

Isaac Watts.

Lime-street, 7th April, 1722. Just going to Theobalds.

P. S. Our family salute you: They were much affected, pleased, and edified with their late visit. Grace be with you, and all your dear relations. *Amen.*

From Mr. afterwards Dr. Thomas Secker, first Bishop of Oxford, and for several Years before his Death Archbishop of Canterbury.

Gloucester, Nov. 18, 1711.

Rev. Sir,

BEFORE I give you an account of the state of our academy, and those other things you desired me, please to accept of my hearty thanks for that service you have done me, both in advising me to prosecute my studies in such an extraordinary place of

education, and in procuring me admittance into it. I wish my improvements may be answerable to the advantages I enjoy; but, however that may happen, your kindness has fixed me in a place where I may be very happy, and spend my time to good purpose; and where, if I do not, the fault will be all my own.

I am sensible how difficult it is to give a character of any person or thing, because the most probable guesses we make very often prove false ones. But, since you are pleased to desire it, I think myself obliged to give you the best and most impartial account of matters I can.

Mr. Jones then I take to be a man of real piety, great learning, and an agreeable temper; one who is very diligent in instructing all under his care, very well qualified to give instructions, and whose well-managed familiarity will always make him respected. He is very strict in keeping good orders, and will effectually preserve his pupils from negligence and immorality. And accordingly, I believe, there are not many academies freer in general from those vices than we are. In particular, my bedfellow, Mr. Scott,* is one of unfeigned religion, and a diligent searcher after truth. His genteel carriage and agreeable disposition gain him the esteem of every one. Mr. Griffith is more than ordinary serious and grave, and improves more in every thing than one could expect from a man who seems to be not much under forty; particularly in Greek and Hebrew he has made a great progress. Mr. Francis† and Mr. Watkins are diligent in study and truly religious. The elder Mr. Jones, having had a better education than they, will in all probability make a greater scholar; and his brother is one of quick parts.

Our logic, which we have read once over, is so contrived as to comprehend all Hereboord, and the far greater part of Mr. Locke's Essay, and the Art of Thinking. What Mr. Jones dictated to us was but short, containing a clear and brief account of the matter, references to the places where it was more fully treated of, and remarks on, or explications of the authors cited, when need required. At our next lecture we gave an account both of what the author quoted and our tutor said, who commonly then gave us a larger explication of it, and so proceeded to the next thing in order. He took care, as far as possible, that we understood the sense as well as remembered the words of what we had read, and that we should not suffer ourselves to be cheated with obscure terms which had no meaning. Though he be no great admirer of the old logic, yet he has taken a great deal of pains both in explaining and correcting Hereboord, and has for the most part made him intelligible, or shewn that he is not so.

The two Mr. Jones's, Mr. Francis, Mr. Watkins, Mr. Sheldon, and two more gentlemen, are to begin Jewish Antiquities in a short time. I was designed for one of their number, but rather chose to read logic once more; both because I was utterly unac-

* Afterwards Dr. Daniel Scott. He was a very learned and amiable man. After he had studied under Mr. Jones, he removed to Utrecht for further education, where he took the degree of doctor of laws. In the year 1741 he published a new version of St. Matthew's Gospel, with critical notes, and an Examination of Dr. Mills's various readings. He published also in the year 1745 an Appendix to H. Stephens's Greek Lexicon, in two volumes.

† Not improbably Mr. Henry Francis, for some time assistant in London to the Rev. Mr. John Foxon, and afterwards pastor of the church at Southampton. I have now before me an original letter of Dr. Watts to him, dated March 10, 1728-9, persuading Mr. Francis's stay at Southampton, in which are expressions of the warmest affection and esteem.

quainted with it when I came to this place, and because the others having all, except Mr. Francis, been at other academies, will be obliged to make more haste than those in a lower class, and consequently cannot have so good or large accounts of any thing, nor so much time to study every head. We shall have gone through our course in about four years time, which I believe nobody that once knows Mr. Jones will think too long.

I began to learn Hebrew as soon as I came hither, and find myself able now to construe and give some grammatical account of about twenty verses in the easier parts of the Bible, after less than an hour's preparation. We read every day two verses apiece in the Hebrew Bible which we turn into Greek (no one knowing which his verses shall be, though at first it was otherwise). And this, with logic, is our morning's work.

Mr. Jones also began about three months ago some critical lectures, in order to the exposition you advised him to. The principal things contained in them are about the Antiquity of the Hebrew Language, Letters, Vowels, the Incorruption of the Scriptures, ancient Divisions of the Bible, an Account of the Talmud, Masora, and Cabala. We are at present upon the Septuagint, and shall proceed after that to the Targumim, and other versions, &c. Every part is managed with abundance of perspicuity, and seldom any material thing is omitted, that other authors have said upon the point, though very frequently we have useful additions of things which are not to be found in them. We have scarce been upon any thing yet, but Mr. Jones has had those writers which are most valued on that head, to which he always refers us. This is what we first set about in the afternoon; which being finished, we read a chapter in the Greek Testament, and after that mathematics. We have gone through all that is commonly taught of algebra and proportion, with the six first books of Enclid, which is all Mr. Jones designs for the gentlemen I mentioned above, but he intends to read something more to the class that comes after them.

This is our daily employment, which in the morning takes up about two hours, and something more in the afternoon. Only on Wednesdays, in the morning, we read Dionysius's Periegesis, on which we have notes mostly geographical, but with some criticisms intermixed; and in the afternoon we have no lecture at all. So on Saturday, in the afternoon, we have only a thesis, which none but they who have done with logic have any concern in. We are also just beginning to read Isocrates and Terence each twice a week. On the latter our tutor will give us some notes which he received in a college from Perizonius.

We are obliged to rise at five of the clock every morning, and to speak Latin always, except when below stairs amongst the family. The people where we live are very civil, and the greatest inconvenience we suffer is, that we fill the house rather too much, being sixteen in number, besides Mr. Jones. But I suppose the increase of his academy will oblige him to remove next spring. We pass our time very agreeably betwixt study and conversation with our tutor, who is always ready to discourse freely of any thing that is useful, and allows us either then or at lecture all imaginable liberty of making objections against his opinion, and prosecuting them as far as we can. In this and every thing else he shows himself so much a gentleman, and manifests so great an affection and tenderness for his pupils, as cannot but command respect and love. I almost forgot to mention our tutor's library, which is composed for the most part of foreign books, which seem to be very well chosen, and are every day of great advantage to us.

Thus I have endeavoured, Sir, to give you an account of all that I thought material or observable amongst us. As for my own part, I apply myself with what diligence I can to every thing which is the subject of our lectures, without preferring one subject before another; because I see nothing we are engaged in, but what is either necessary, or extremely useful for one who would thoroughly understand those things, which most concern him, or be able to explain them well to others. I hope I have not spent my time, since I came to this place, without some small improvement, both in human knowledge, and that which is far better, and I earnestly desire the benefit of your prayers, that God would be pleased to fit me better for his service, both in this world and the next. This, if you please to afford me, and your advice with relation to study, or whatever else you think convenient, must needs be extremely useful, as well as agreeable, and shall be thankfully received by your most obliged humble servant,

T. Secker.*

From the Same.

Cuddesden, near Oxford, June 19, 1741.

Sir,

I AM extremely obliged to you for the agreeable present of your book,† which is peculiarly well adapted for the direction and improvement of students in the university, where your Logic is by no means the only piece of yours that is read with high esteem. You have been a diligent promoter of useful and especially religious knowledge, of christian faith, and christian morals. On these accounts I have always respected you from the time that I had so many years ago the advantage of your conversation, and always rejoiced in the just honour that has been universally paid you; and, as this opportunity of expressing my regard gives me much pleasure, so, if the favour of letting me see you next winter will not be inconvenient to you, it will be a great satisfaction to, Sir,

Your affectionate humble servant,

Tho. Oxford.

From the Same.

Cuddesden, Sept. 14, 1743.

Sir,

I HEARTILY thank you for your obliging letter, and, had I known that you had printed a sermon on the subject,‖ I should not have failed to enrich my own from it.

* This very sensible letter was written by Mr. afterwards Archbishop Secker, at the early age of eighteen. It does honour to himself, at the same time it pays such distinguished and deserved respect to his learned, vigilant, and amiable tutor, the Rev. Mr. Samuel Jones. Had Dr. Porteus, the late worthy Bishop of London, and Dr. Stinton, the authors of the Archbishop's Memoirs prefixed to his works, been acquainted with Mr. Jones's eminent merits, they certainly would not have passed him over so slightly as one Mr. Jones, who kept an academy at Gloucester.

† Dr. Watts's Improvement of the Mind, or a Supplement to the Art of Logic.

‖ Dr. Watts's Essay towards the Encouragement of Charity Schools.

I hope the things I have said in favour of our charity schools are true. I hope the christians of this nation in general are grown much milder towards each other, and I am sure we have great need to gain in this virtue what we lose in others, and become a more united body as we become a smaller, which I apprehend we do. But fear not, little flock. May God direct and bless us all in our poor endeavours to serve him! May he give you every needful support under your long sickness, and restore you speedily to your former usefulness, if it be his holy will! I am with great esteem, Sir,

Your affectionate and faithful humble servant,

THO. OXFORD.

From the Same.

St. James's, Westminster, March 20, 1744-5.

SIR,

I HEARTILY thank God that he hath restored you to a better state of health, and should not have permitted your letter, which brought me that good news, to continue unanswered so long, if more than ordinary business had not sometimes put it out of my power, and sometimes out of my thoughts, to make you my acknowledgments for it. The civilities for which you thank me, are no more than a very imperfect return of justice for the great services you have done to religion; and you have made a valuable addition to them in the book* you have now been pleased to send me: Particularly by what you have written in so strong and awful, yet so compassionate and good-natured a manner, in defence of the scripture-doctrine concerning the duration of future punishments. I pray God to continue you long in a capacity of being still farther useful, and am with great regard, Sir,

Your obliged humble servant,

THO. OXFORD.

From Jonathan Belcher, Esq. to Dr. Watts, just upon his appointment as Governor of New England.

Whitehall, January 8, 1729-30.

REVEREND SIR,

I BELIEVE you will find among your last year's New-England letters, one that came by me from my esteemed friend, the Rev. Mr. Colman; and I think, sometime in April last, I had the pleasure of waiting on you at my Lady Abney's, and afterwards of seeing you at Tunbridge, since which I had promised myself the satisfaction of a more particular personal acquaintance with Dr. Watts; but the sovereign God (in whose hands our times are) having lately confined you at Theobalds, and called me to an affair of life that engrosses much of my time to be in readiness to look homeward early in the spring; I say, these things have debarred me of that satisfaction and happiness I have so much desired. In New England I have often regaled myself with your ingenious pieces, and I can assure you (without a compliment) all Dr. Watts's works are had in

* Dr. Watts's Discourses on the World to Come.

great esteem and honour amongst us. It was with uncommon concern I observed your weak, tender state of health the last Lord's-day; and although, as you very excellently set forth to us, "that the God of nature can make new vessels, and the God of grace can fill them with treasure; and although the apostle tells us we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, yet Christ's ministers are the salt of the earth, and how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! And when Christ fills his vessels with precious treasures, and makes his ministers burning and shining lights, God's people will sorrow most of all to hear the ministers tell them, they fear they shall see their faces no more." But, I hope it may stand with the holy will of God to restore and confirm your health, that his church may have Dr. Watts long in store, still to go on, by the grace and assistance of your ascended Lord, in multiplying the zeals of your ministry to his honour and glory, and the eternal happiness of those whom you shall turn from the error of their ways; and then those sons and daughters you have here begotten in Christ will serve as sparkling jems to give lustre to that crown of righteousness which God, the righteous judge, will fix on your head in the great day of his appearance. Amen. God grant it may be so!

And now, Sir, since it has pleased the all-wise God (in his providence) to remove me from one ordination of life to another, and to a station where I must stand in a glaring light, exposed to the view of the whole world, and every one will think himself intitled to be my *censor morum;* to subject my words and actions to his ill-natured cavils and criticisms: And, I am sensible, great is the burthen and duty of the place with which the King has honoured me. I therefore desire you to join with me, while I bow my knees to the God of all grace and wisdom, that he would give me a wise and understanding heart, to discern between good and bad, and to know how to go out and in before his people. Every day fills my soul with care and solicitude, that I may discharge my trust to the honour of God, the good of his people, and my own comfort and credit. When I consider how ungratefully and unprofitably I have lived to God and man, it is with shame that I tell you, I am this day entered into the forty-ninth year of my age. My days are swifter than a post, and short (perhaps very short) the race I have to run; may I then double my diligence for the honour and service of God and man, and so as may most of all promote my own eternal happiness.

You will pardon me for the freedom I have taken with a gentleman, more a stranger than I could wish, and believe me to be, with great esteem and respect, reverend Sir,

Your most obedient and humble servant,

JONATHAN BELCHER.

P. S. My service to the Rev. Mr, Price.

From Dr. Doddridge to Dr. Watts.

May, 1731.

Reverend Sir,

I VERY willingly comply with the request of my good friend, Mr. Hawtyn, in writing to you by him, as it gives me an opportunity of introducing to your knowledge a person very much esteemed by us in these parts, on account of his genius, learning, piety, and conduct, and at the same time of paying my respects to Dr. Watts. With what sincere reverence and affection I do it, I hope, Sir, I need not tell you at large. I cannot but think that, whenever I have been so happy as to see and converse with you, my countenance must have discovered the inward pleasure that was diffusing itself over my mind on such an occasion. I am deeply sensible of the favour which you have done me, in joining with some other friends, in recommending me as a tutor at your board. If I do not impose upon myself, my conscience witnesses for me in the sight of God, that the hopes of usefulness, rather than the prospects of any worldly advantages, have engaged me to undertake the work. And I persuade myself that your prayers are sometimes concurring with mine, that the great Author of knowledge and of grace may impart to me all that furniture of both kinds which such a station requires, and may succeed my attempts for the edification of his church, and the glory of our common Lord. Till heaven is enriched by your removal thither, I hope, Sir, to find in you a counsellor and a friend, if God should continue my life; and I cannot but admire the goodness of Providence in honouring me with the friendship of such a person. I can truly say, your name was in the number of those which were dearest to me, long before I ever saw you. Yet, since I have known you, I cannot but find something of a more tender pleasure in the thought of your successful various services in the advancement of the best of causes, that of real, vital, practical christianity. What happened under my observation a few days ago, gave me joy with regard to you, which is yet so warm in my mind that I hope, Sir, you will pardon my relating the occasion of it. On Wednesday last, I was preaching in a barn to a pretty large assembly of plain country people, at a village a few miles off. After a sermon from *Hebrews* vi. 12. we sung one of your hymns, (which, if I remember right, was the cxl. of the second book) and in that part of the worship I had the satisfaction, to observe tears in the eyes of several of the auditory, and after the service was over, some of them told me that they were not able to sing, so deeply were their minds affected with it; and the clerk, in particular, told me he could hardly utter the words of it. These were most of them poor people, who work for their living. On the mention of your name, I found they had read several of your books with great delight, and that your Hymns and Psalms were almost their daily entertainment. And when one of the company said, "What if Dr. Watts should come down to Northampton?" another replied with a remarkable warmth, "The very sight of him would be like an ordinance to me." I mention the thing just as it was, and am persuaded it is but a familiar, natural specimen of what often occurs amongst a multitude of christians who never saw your face. Nor do I, by any means, intend it as a compliment to a genius capable of entertaining by the same

compositions the greatest and the meanest of mankind; but to remind you, dear Sir, (with all the deference and humility due to a superior character) how much you owe to him who has honoured you as the instrument of such extensive service. Had Providence cast my lot near you, I should joyfully have embraced the most frequent opportunities of improving my understanding and warming my heart by conversing with you, which would surely have been greatly for my advantage as a tutor, a minister, and a christian. As it is, I will omit none which may fall in my way; and when I regret it that I can enjoy no more of you here, will comfort myself with the thoughts of that blessed state where I hope for ever to dwell with you, and to join with you in sweeter and sublimer songs than you have taught the church below. It is my desire and my expectation, that these and your other writings may be transmitted to the remotest generations, and that thousands yet unborn may have eternal reason to be thankful for them. And it is, I hope, a desire animated by a higher principle than that sincere affection, gratitude, and respect with which I am, dear and honoured Sir,

Your most obliged, humble servant,

P. Doddridge.

P. S. My most humble service attends Lady Abney, and her most agreeable family, with Mr. Price, Mr. Neal, Mr. Jennings, Mr. Auther, &c.

From Dr. Watts to a Friend.

Stoke Newington, near London, Jan. 21, 1735.

Sir,

YOUR letter, dated about the middle of October, should have been answered long ago, had I not been withheld from my study by long illness; nor am I yet fully recovered. I take pleasure, Sir, to find your honest enquiries after truth, and that you are not willing either to put off your children, or to be contented yourself with a mere set of words, instead of clear and intelligible doctrines.

I will therefore write you my thoughts, in a few lines, of that impotency and inability of man to believe, and repent, and return to God, which arises from the fall, and which is, I think, the best and the only way to secure our thoughts from running into the extremes of Antinomian opinions on the one side, or Arminian on the other.

This impotency, though it may be called natural, or rather native, as it comes to us by nature in its present corrupted state, yet it is not a want of natural powers, either of understanding or will, to know or choose that which is good; for if there were not natural powers sufficient for this purpose, I do not see how men could be charged as criminals, in not receiving the gracious offers of the gospel. This impotence, therefore, is what our divines usually call a moral impotence, *i. e.* their mind will not learn divine things, because they shut their eyes; their will refuse the proposals of grace, they shut it out of their hearts; they have a delight in sin, and dislike to Christ and his salvation; they have a rooted obstinacy of will against the methods of divine mercy, and against the holiness which is connected with happiness. And yet this moral impotency is described

in scripture by such methods as represent us *blind* or *dead in sin*, and that we can no more change our nature, than the *Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots;* and the reason of these strong expressions is, because God knows this natural aversion to grace and holiness is so strong and rooted in their hearts, that they will never renounce sin and receive the salvation of Christ, without the powerful influence of the Spirit of God; even that same Spirit which can cure those who are naturally blind, or can raise the dead.

Now that this weakness of man to do that which is good is a moral impotence, appears by the moral remedies which are applied to cure it: viz. commands, promises, threatenings, which sort of methods would be useless and ridiculous to apply to natural impotence: that is, to make the blind see, or the dead arise. It must be concluded, therefore, that man has a natural ability, *i. e.* natural powers to do what God requires, but at the same time such a native aversion of will, that he will never do it without divine grace. Thus there is a fair way laid for the necessity of divine grace, and yet at the same time a just foundation laid for the condemnation of impenitent sinners. I have spoken more largely to this subject in the eleventh of the Berry-Street Sermons which were published last year in 2 vols. 8vo.

May the wisdom and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ direct you to walk in a safe way to eternal life, and to lead your children therein! at the same time assuring you, that the happening to take a little different turn of thought in some of the difficult inquiries, is not of so vast importance as some persons would make it to be, with respect to our salvation, provided we do but maintain a constant dependance upon the grace of the Spirit of God in all our duties to assist us, and on the perfect righteousness or obedience and sufferings of Christ, as our atonement for sin, and the only effectual ground of our acceptance with God. I am, Sir, under frequent returning weaknesses, rendered unable to write much, and therefore subscribe

Your friend and humble servant, unknown,

ISAAC WATTS.

From the Rev. George Thomson.

St. Ginny's, Jan. 17, 1736.

POET, Divine, Saint, the delight, the guide, the wonder of the virtuous world; permit, reverend Sir, a stranger unknown, and likely to be for ever unknown, to desire one blessing from you in a private way. 'Tis this, that when you approach the throne of grace and lift up holy hands, when you get closest to the mercy-seat, and wrestle mightily for the peace of Jerusalem, you would breathe one petition for my soul's health. In return I promise you a share for life in my unworthy prayers, who honour you as a father and a brother (though differently ordered) and conclude myself,

Your affectionate humble servant,

GEORGE THOMSON,

P. S. If you can forgive my freedom, and find a few minutes leisure to ascertain me of your kind design to oblige, to make me happy, direct to George Thomson, Vicar of St. Ginny's, near Camelford, in Cornwall.

Dr. Watts to his Father, just before his Death.

Newington, Feb. 8, 1736-7.

HONOURED AND DEAR SIR,

'TIS now ten days since I heard from you, and learned by my nephews that you had been recovered from a very threatening illness. When you are in danger of life I believe my sister is afraid to let me know the worst for fear of affecting me too much. But as I feel old age daily advancing on myself,* I am endeavouring to be ready for my removal hence; and, though it gives a shock to nature when what has been long dear to one is taken away, yet reason and religion should teach us to expect it in these scenes of mortality, and a dying world. Blessed be God for our immortal hopes through the blood of Jesus, who has taken away the sting of death! What could such dying creatures do without the comforts of the gospel? I hope you feel those satisfactions of soul on the borders of life which nothing can give but this gospel which you taught us all in our younger years. May these divine consolations support your spirits under all your growing infirmities, and may our blessed Saviour form your soul to such an holy heavenly frame, that you may wait with patience amidst the langours of life for a joyful passage into the land of immortality? May no cares nor pains ruffle, nor afflict your spirit! May you maintain a constant serenity at heart, and sacred calmness of mind, as one who has long past midnight, and is in view of the dawning day? The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Let the garments of light be found upon us, and let us lift up our heads, for our redemption draws nigh. *Amen.*

I am, dear Sir, your most affectionate obedient Son,

ISAAC WATTS.

From Bishop Gibson to Dr. Watts.

Fulham, Aug. 12, 1739.

GOOD SIR,

I RECEIVED the favour of your letter, and am glad to find that you think the cautions which I have given against lukewarmness, may, by the blessing of God, be of some service to religion. There is, without doubt, great need to awaken people out of that unhappy state; and the labouring to do it, is what may truly be called the chief part of the ministerial office. But though we may hope that there are few who wholly neglect the work, we must never expect that it will be done by all with equal zeal and life. When you speak of the way of preaching among the Dissenters, you will not expect it from me to believe, that all the preachers do it with the same force and energy that Dr. Watts has done, and still does, and I pray God he may long continue to do.

After I had given directions to my clergy, and put them into the hands of every particular incumbent, I think I could say no less, than that I *hoped* they were not unmindful of them, unless I knew the contrary.

It is a great misfortune to the Church of England, that in market towns, where there is the greatest need of able ministers, there is usually the meanest provision for them; which gives great advantage to the preachers of other denominations, and may, in some

* The Doctor was now in his 63d year.

places, be the occasion of particular people choosing to resort to them, rather than to the church. This may sometimes happen either through the want of vigour and earnestness in the delivery, or through an unhappiness of voice, and sometimes by not preaching so frequently upon points purely christian as the person could wish; cases to be much lamented when they do happen, but not to be prevented or wholly remedied by the utmost care and endeavour that a bishop can use, unless he had the appointment of them.

It had been happy for Mr. Whitefield, if he had taken the wise advice and cautions you gave him. But, from the time that men imagine themselves to be singled ont by God for extraordinary purposes, and in consequence of that to be guided by extraordinary impulses and operations, all human advice is lost upon them. However, as God knows how to bring good out of evil, I will hope that these extravagancies of theirs may be the occasion of some good in the event, if they do not get too much head.

I am, with great affection and esteem, Sir,

Your very faithful Servant,

EDM. LONDON.

From Dr. Watts to Bishop Gibson.

Tunbridge Wells, Aug. 15, 1739.

MY LORD,

THE very kind and condescending reception you were pleased to give to the last book which I published, demands my first acknowledgement; and it persuades me that your lordship much approves of our plain and warm manner of preaching, and our endeavours to make the great doctrines of the gospel to reach the hearts and consciences of those that hear us.

And I am called again to be thankful to your lordship for the honour you did me in ordering your late pastoral letter into my hands. Your lordship has so seasonably and so happily cautioned your flock against that lukewarmness, which in times of peace is ready to overspread all the professors of christianity, as, I hope, under the concurring influences of divine grace, will have a blessed effect upon the people under your care. I hope, also, the clergy under your inspection will not think themselves neglected in your lordship's discourse, but will not only apply themselves with all holy zeal and fervency to warn their hearers of this danger, but set themselves to root it out from the tribe of Levi as well as the rest of the tribes of our Israel, and that every one among the priesthood may be burning and shining lights, and powerful examples among the people.

Your lordship's distinction of the extraodinary and the ordinary influences of the Holy Spirit is so very necessary, that I think the New Testament cannot be understood without it, and I wish Mr. Whitefield would not have risen above any pretences to the ordinary influences, unless he could have given some better evidences of it. He has acknowledged to me in conversation, that it is such an impression upon his own mind that he knows to be divine, though he cannot give me any convincing proof of it. I said many things to warn him of the danger of delusion, and to guard him against the irregularities and imprudences which youth and zeal might lead him into, and told him plainly, that though I believed him very sincere and desirous to do good to souls, yet I was not convinced of any extraordinary call he had to some parts of his conduct; and he seemed to take this free discourse in a very candid and modest manner.

I own with your lordship, that so large and general a charge as he lays upon the clergy of the established church, *it is impossible for him to know certainly whether it is true or not*, and therefore these censures are by no means justifiable. But if your lordship will permit me to say, that your lordship's excellent citation of some pages of your charge to those of your diocese is no sufficient refutation of the censure. That very charge was put into my hands, at least twelve years ago, in Essex, and it was the first thing that wrought in my heart a reverence and veneration for your lordship. I think no man could give better advice; and I persuade myself, all the best of the Dissenters, and I think far the greatest part of them, must have approved it with honour. But I cannot but suppose your lordship is so well acquainted with the lower clergy of England, as to know that not a great many of them preach according to those admirable directions. If they did, I easily imagine there would be no Dissenters in many parishes in England where now they abound. It is not the differences of ordination and ceremony, no, nor the imposition of them without warrant, that are so well understood as to create a large separation on those accounts merely. But it is the want of such preaching as your lordship recommends that makes many persons, of serious religion, uneasy that they find not such edification for their souls under the parochial clergy in many towns and villages. Nor do I think your lordship, and the rest of your brethren the bishops, can do any thing so effectual to lessen the separation, and to make all the Whitefields less regarded and less dangerous to the church, as to induce the ministers under your care to preach and converse among their people with that evangelical spirit, that zeal for the honour of God and success of the gospel, and with that compassion for the souls of men that your lordship so much approves and advises in your pious and excellent charge.

Forgive me, my Lord, I entreat you to forgive me, if my zeal for such preaching as your lordship prescribes, has carried me out so far as to forget myself and the person to whom I write, as to say any thing unbecoming the lower station of, my lord,

Your lordship's most obliged
And faithful humble servant,
ISAAC WATTS.

From Dr. Coleman to Dr. Watts.

Boston, May 7, 1739.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

YOUR favour of April 4th is before me, and the box containing Dr. Doddridge and Dr. Guyse's Paraphrases, for me and Mr. Cooper, together with the two sets of Mrs. Rowe's works. We like well the binding, and are greatly obliged to you for the care and trouble you have been at to oblige us as you have done. I thank you for the two separate pictures of Mrs. Rowe. Her soul and face were both pleasant to me. I had in a manner lost the features, which I now perfectly remember. The account of her divine life, and walk with God, rises beyond my before raised ideas of her: her serenity, retirements, diligence, and abundant charities, are all wonderful. The father's character is bright as the offspring's, and very just according to all I saw in the two years of my acquaintance with him. He told me once, that Philomela was not to be compared with her mother. It pleased me beyond expression to hear him talk of his

deceased; and so now does the account of the manner and way whereby Providence began their acquaintance. He told me one forenoon, as I rode out with him, that he had buried a younger sister of Philomela's, who was brighter and lovelier than she, and wrote as well in prose and poetry; but both of them together was not equal to their perfect mother. After dinner, being alone with Mrs. Singer, (it was in 1698) I told her what her father had said to me of her excelling sister. She was perfectly pleased at it, and answered, "That as she was the youngest, so she was much the most gay and cheerful, and pleasing to her father; she always saw that he most delighted in her, and that she was indeed a lovely daughter and sister." The whole conversation that afternoon was upon her. Philomela told me, that this sister loved her to a great excess; it was often troublesome to her; she would be ever with her, and broke in often upon her retirements for study; and when they retired by consent for composing, she would bring generally more lines written, but as she thought too hastily. The younger daughter was wont to invent ways to try the affection of her sister, and to win it more and more, and would often complain that she returned not an equal love. She gave me several instances of those childish ways of endearment, which I well remember; and then she proceeded to give me the account of her death.

"It was (said she,) and if I give not the words, I will keep exactly to the things she said; and also up to the life and spirit with which she gave me the endearing story: which I soon after wrote down, and now keep to the record I then made of it; for it struck me too much ever to forget it. It was in my sister's death that my father was to be tried; but it was I that was taken sick, and my sickness prevailed to a very dangerous degree; and when the physicians let them know my great danger, and the little hope they had of my recovery; this dear sister came to me with a visible concern, and earnestly besought me to tell her, whether I was ready and willing to die, if God should call for me from them by this sickness, for she was afraid I should die; and she could not comfortably part with me but only to go to Christ; she hoped, therefore, that my interest in him was comfortable and clear to me." I earnestly turned to her and said, "Why, sister, do they think me in such hazard? I must confess to you that my distress would be great, on the account of my soul, if I thought my death were now coming on, for I have not that full assurance of my interest in Christ, which I have always begged of God I may have before he pleases to call me hence." No sooner had she heard me say this, but she fell, as in an agony, on her knees by my bedside, and in a manner inexpressible, for fervour and humility, she begged of God, "That if her father must have the grief of burying one of his children, it might be her; for through his free grace, and to the glory of it, she could joyfully profess before him her assured hope of her interest in his everlasting mercy, through Jesus Christ! wherefore she could willingly surrender herself to die, if it might please God to grant her sister a further space for the making her calling and election sure." Having prayed thus, in a transport the most surprising and astonishing to me (said Philomela), she earnestly kissed me and left the room, without giving me time or power to answer her a word; and what is almost incredible to relate, from that hour or two I grew better and recovered, but she took to her bed and died in a few days. Conceive, if you can, Mr. Colman (said she), how I was astonished at this event of Providence, and overwhelmed with sorrow! Yet I recovered health, but the load of grief upon me, and wonder, at the strange occurrence, confined me to my chamber for five or six weeks. My chief work was to consider the mind of

God in this his mercy to me, that I might make it evident, by his grace with me, that in love to my soul he had wrought this. I set myself to comfort my father what I could, and this was also his care toward me; nor durst we be inconsolable under a bereavement so circumstanced; yet my mourning is always returning to this day, with the remembrance of a love strong as death."

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BENJAMIN COLMAN.

From Mr. Benjamin Colman to Dr. Watts.

Boston, Jan. 16, 1739-40.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

A WEEK is past since your letter and packet of September 17th, and another of October 12th, arrived together in Captain Forbes. I thank you for the books bought, and the account given of them; I find it exact and judicious, I could not bear to read Thomson through now I have him; I thank you for not buying the second volume; he studies obscurity and labours intricacy, while Sommerville's chain is smooth as an eagle's soaring. All of Young's pleases, edifies, and surprises. Mr. Lawe on Perfection is not equal, I think, to his Serious Call, which I had seen before. I present you now with our Boston edition of your Hymns and Guide to Prayer, done well for us. My Withered Hand, that little sermon, is like to be of some use here, and is in the press again, together with a little book of four sermons on the Incomprehensibleness of God.

Mr. Whitefield arrived some months past at Philadelphia, where, through the Jerseys, and at New York, he preached daily to incredible multitudes with great eloquence and zeal, as a good judge there writes me.

He has pleased to send me a letter and ask a correspondence with me. He was shewn at New York a letter of mine which named him with respect, but wherein I happened to say, " he is but a young divine;" his sermon of Justification led me to say so. " You said right, Sir," says he to me," I am but a novice in the things of God; I can only say I desire to know the whole will of God, that I may communicate it to others. Christ is so good a master, that I would have all men drawn after him. He is pleased to let me experience daily the teachings of his blessed Spirit, and to shew me the riches, freeness, and eternal duration of his love. Pray that I may be able to see all things clearly."

America is like to do him much honour, as you will see by the prints from New York and Philadelphia here inclosed. And it is a most happy prospect to me, in favour of many a poor soul through the colonies of Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina, that he is gone preaching the gospel through them, and praying, in his way to Georgia. He proposes to see Boston in his return to Europe about June next, by God's will; and our town and country stand ready to receive him as an angel of God. Indeed, ministers and people, all but his own church, speak of him with great esteem and love. He seems spirited from on high in an extraordinary manner, assisted and prospered.

Mr. Holden sent me over his Journals and Answer to the Bishop of London; I read there of his calling in to see you as he passed through Newington, but neither you nor Dr. Guise have said a word to me of him; nor do I find how the dissenting ministers stand affected to him; it may be prudent in them to be silent: But, in what of mercy or

judgment, God may mean this rise of the methodists to the glory of the church, or the nation in general, time must show. I shall be glad of your thoughts of this matter.

As to the account I sent you of the story from Mrs. Rowe's own mouth, I leave it to Mr. Rowe to make what use of it he pleases, and am far, I assure you, from affecting to have it inserted at large in my words, or as from me. The more I consider her beauteous life and works, the more I admire the grace of God which preserved, animated, and honoured her so. But it is a pleasure to me that you have named me to the Honourable Lady Hartford on the occasion, whom I love in the truth for her love to Mrs. Rowe, and her most endearing returns of high affection. Such beauteous souls are formed and shewn for the love and esteem of all the ends of the earth. Mrs. Rowe's hiding that secret from Lady Hartford, seems almost a prohibition from her of telling it to the world; or, if the world now hears of it, the silence of her after-years about it may give it a double force and edge upon the ingenious and pious part of mankind.

Mr. Sargeant goes on with great pleasure in his work, and Providence has sent up a worthy gentleman with his family to him, whose discreet and very amiable daughter he has married.

I am sorry to hear of your continued low state of health, and that you think it proceeds from a shock of the paralytic kind; but the Lord, whose you are, when on earth healed the sick even of the palsy! May he receive, support, refresh the soul, and prolong the life and service of my beloved friend! Let not my correspondence with you be a burden and oppression. I hope God will yet give you health to add to your last songs on death, "the world to come."

I have had some revival the summer past, and the winter has not hitherto broken it; indeed, it has begun in a manner but this week, and earth and sky are alike dazzling bright; a serenity which you (our revered mother isle) are altogether a stranger to; it braces up also our nerves, and makes the old, whom it does not kill, think themselves hale again for a season.

I have wrote to the ministers of Connecticut of the packet for them, which you have committed to Mr. Cox's care, that they may write to his indolent shopkeeper here, whom I call so as I find him, on his going off to London, and now on his return; for by him I sent for some books, and at the end of two months after his arrival here, heard nothing of his bringing any, though his money lay ready: And now two months more are gone, and not a word from him, so I suppose he bought none, or has sold them to another. I have sent my friends the Rules of the Salisbury library.

I thank you, Sir, for your free and kind advice to Mr. Hillhouse, by his messenger, Mr. Mason, and have informed the gentlemen of Connecticut of it, to whom (with us) it is very agreeable.

And as to your question, "Why we give rings at funerals, and have plate in our houses, when we have no silver and gold currency among us, as a medium of trade!" I must first own, that Boston has always been too expensive in funerals, and also in vessels of plate in the house. A-la-mode and lutestring scarfs were our mourning twenty years ago, we reformed to rings, which were about half the expence. Our people expect a great deal of labour from their ministers when their families are sick, and have it: and the richer in return gives us a ring, which, till death returns again is, it may be, all the vail from them; three or four in a congregation excepted. The gold the mean while is only matter of trade and merchandise in the goldsmith's shop among us, like other

goods; and as to the silver, it is bought up by the merchants to make returns to you, to pay debts or buy more goods from you; and if one or two hundred thousand pounds in silver or gold were brought in among us to-morrow, we owe it to you, and ought to remit it presently, or to make gain of it, or purchase what we need from you, we send it to you. It is true, Sir, as you say, "A public self-denial in these instances would soon mend the matter with us," that is, in half a century it would do it, for so long the want of it has been bringing us into these circumstances, and as long there have not been wanting public and private warnings of the wrong and injurious step; but, beside the private spirit of traffic, wherein every one is apt to look to himself first, we have abundance of strangers from you and other places, who look only to themselves and employers, and what will make the easiest and best returns; and buy up the silver, and gold, and wanting often to return presently themselves, will give sixpence in an ounce more for one, and so in proportion for the other; and our merchants are hereby forced to do the same, or give up the staple metal into their hands. How to extricate ourselves is difficult, and to preach self-denial to the merchant is, alas! too much in vain.

War is proclaimed, and our Americans are much spirited for it, but our poor province left defenceless and naked by sea and land, the instruction from the king to our governor tying up his hands, and our representatives tying up therefore theirs. If France goes into the war, down will come the Indians, we may fear, on our wide-extended borders; there is not a fort in any good repair or furniture, nor a soldier or officer to be paid; and the same on our coasts. God can protect us, but surely expects we use the means of common prudence; but we have not self-denial enough to stoop one to another in an exigence, or to the king for self-preservation. We need the more of the pity and prayers of our friends; but how can we pray in faith, save in the pity that is infinite to pardon and heal us, and save us? When nearest at the throne of grace, bear us on your heart, and him in particular who is under the strictest bands of friendship and gratitude.

Sir, your affectionate brother and servant,

BENJ. COLMAN.

P. S. If we hear not from one another as we expect, we must look that vessels and letters will sometimes fall into the hands of enemies.

From the Archbishop of York to Dr. Watts.

Downing-Street, Westminster, Oct. 16, 1739.

REVEREND SIR,

I HAVE received your favour of the 10th of this month, and have great pleasure in observing, that my small benevolence to Mr. Leland will be doubled to the good man by your leave to find its way to him through the hands of so valuable a friend.

On that account also it is, that I take the liberty to ask the further favour of knowing from you, if the good man's papers have escaped the flames, and that we may yet hope to see the reply which we have heard he was preparing to a second volume, not long since published by the shameless enemy of the person and doctrine of our blessed Saviour.

May the good God of heaven and earth support and assist us all in our just endeavours to repel, with vigour, the virulent and impious assaults on the whole fabric of our common faith; and to detect, with temper, the fallacious and unmanly arts employed by the modern adversaries of our holy religion, with a degree of boldness and inveteracy not to be equalled by those of any age that I have read of, since the days of Julian the Apostate.

Give me leave to return to you in kind all your good wishes to me, together with the true esteem and sincere respect of,

Reverend Sir, your faithful
And obliged humble servant,
LAU. EBOR.

Lady Hartford to Dr. Watts.

Percy Lodge, Nov. 15, 1747.

REVEREND SIR,

THE last time I troubled you with a letter, was to return you thanks on the Glory of Christ, a subject which can never be exhausted, or ever thought of without calling for all the praise which our hearts are capable of in our present imperfect state. My gratitude to you is again awakened by the obligation I am under (and, indeed, the whole christian church) to you for giving Dr. Doddridge the plan, and engaging him to write his excellent book of the Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul: I have read it with the utmost attention and pleasure, and I would hope with some advantage to myself, unless I should be so unhappy as to find the impression it has made on my heart wear off like the morning dew which passeth away, which God in his mercy avert.

If you have a correspondence with him, I could wish you would convey my thanks to him, and the assurance that I shall frequently remember him in my humble (though weak) addresses to the throne of Almighty Grace (and which I know myself unworthy to look up to any otherwise than through the merits and sufferings of our blessed Saviour), that he may go on to spread the knowledge and practice of his doctrine, and that he may add numbers to the church, and finally hear those blessed words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into thy Master's joy."

I cannot help mentioning to you the manner of this book falling into my hands, as I think there was something providential in it. About four months ago my poor lord had so totally lost his appetite, that his physician thought it necessary for him to go to Bath, I was not a moment in doubt whether I should attend him there, because I knew it was my duty, and besides I could not have been easy to be absent when I hoped my care might be of some use: Yet I undertook the journey with a weight upon my spirits, and a reluctance which is not to be described, though I concealed it from him. Since the great affliction with which it pleased Almighty God to visit me by the death of a most valuable and only son, I found myself happiest in almost an entire retreat from the world; and being of a sudden called into a place where I remembered to have seen the utmost of its hurry and vanity exerted, terrified my imagination to the last degree, and I shed tears every time I was alone, at the thoughts of what I expected to encounter; yet this d[illegible]aded change has, by the goodness of God, proved one of the happiest

periods in my life, and I can look back upon no part of it with greater thankfulness and satisfaction. I had the comfort to see my Lord Hartford recovering his health by the use of those waters, as fast as I could hope for. I found it was no longer necessary (as formerly, to avoid giving offence) to be always or frequently in company; I enjoyed the conversation of two worthy old friends, whom I did not expect to meet there; and had an opportunity of renewing my acquaintance with Lady Huntingdon, and admiring that truly christian spirit which seems to animate the whole course of her life; and as I seldom went out I read a great deal, and Frederick the bookseller used to send the new books which he received on the waggon nights, of which I kept what I chose, and sent back the rest. One night he sent me an account of some remarkable passages relating to the life of Colonel Gardiner; as I had known this gentleman in his unconverted state, and often heard with admiration the sudden and thorough change of his conduct for many years, it gave me a curiosity to read a book which seemed to promise me some information upon that subject. I was so touched with the account given of it, that I could not help speaking of it to almost every body I saw; among others, the Dowager Lady Hyndford came to make me a visit in the morning, and as I knew she was of his country, and had lived much in it, I begun to talk to her of the book, and happened to name the author. Upon which she said she would believe whatever he wrote, for he was a truly good man, and had wrote upon the Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul, in a manner which she was sure would please me. She gave me the title in writing, and I bought the book the day before I left Bath. I have now been at home three weeks, and have already had the pleasure to engage several others to read it, who I hope will think of it as I do. I would not wish to trouble you to write to me yourself, but a letter from your amanuensis to let me know how you enjoy your health, and whether you are still carrying on some work of your pen, to the glory of our great Master, would be a very sincere pleasure to me. Let me beg to be remembered in your prayers, for I am every day more sensible of the imperfection of my own, and yet I hope my heart is sincere in its desire, that it may be brought to a perfect conformity and submission to the will of my heavenly Father.

My Lord Hartford always mentions you with regard, and will be glad of your acceptance of the assurance of his friendship,

I am, with an affectionate esteem, Sir,
Your most faithful
And obliged humble servant,
HARTFORD.

From Dr. Watts to his Brother Enoch Watts.

[Evidently written in his younger days, probably when a student, but without date.]

MY DEAR BROTHER,

I SEND you the following definitions, or perhaps rather descriptions, according to your request, being the shortest and most comprehensive that I can form upon the subjects.

Yours affectionately,
ISAAC WATTS.

The several opinions about religion, that are this day in England, are as follow: First, in respect of doctrine; Atheists, Deists, Arians, Socinians, Quakers, Papists, Arminians, Sabbatarians, Anabaptists, Calvinists, Baxterians, and Antinomians.

I. ATHEISTS.

First, Deny the being of God. 2nd, Say that the world is eternal, that it had no beginning, and shall have no end; and that as men are continually born, and afterwards die, so successive generations shall last to eternity. Others indeed there are, who say the world was formed some thousands of years ago by atoms, or little particles of matter jumping together by chance, and that these atoms shall after some time fall to pieces again; and afterwards, it may be, jump into new worlds—a very pretty conceit! So that they believe these atoms to be from eternity to eternity. 3rd, Hence it follows, that there is nothing in man distinct from his body, and that the soul is nothing but fine spirits, drawn from the blood, and playing about in the brain. 4th, Hence it follows, that they own no after state, but as the brute dies so dies the man, and the soul dies with the body. 5th, As a consequence of all this, they think they may indulge themselves in all manner of pleasures.

II. DEISTS.

First, They own there is a God. 2nd, That this God is to be worshipped, *i. e.* by loving him, honouring, and having awful thoughts of him. 3rd, They deny the scriptures to be the word of God, and so are called Antiscripturists. 4th, They deny the Trinity and Christ, and all the methods of the christian religion that are particularly revealed in scripture, and oblige themselves only to perform the duties of natural religion, *i, e.* loving and honouring God in general, and sometimes praying to him and giving him thanks, and being honest among men. 5th, Hereby they suppose they so please God, that they shall be in a happy state hereafter, if there be any such thing, for some of them doubt whether there be or no.

III. ARIANS.

Arians are old heretics, the disciples of one Arius, above one thousand years ago, and in our times some men are apt to believe his errors, which are, First, That Christ is not real and true God, equal with the Father, but only a creature created before all things else, and God made use of him before he made the world. This notion they build upon the false interpretation of 1 *John* i. 2, 3. and *Col.* i. 15, 16. 2nd, That Christ is called God only in respect of his office; that is, his doing miracles, his instructing the world, and such like. 3rd, They deny the Holy Spirit to be a person in the Godhead, and so overthrow the Trinity, and hence they are called Anti-trinitarians.

IV. SOCINIANS.

There was one Socinus, in Calvin's time, who revived the heresy of Arius, but explained it after another manner. First, the Socinians deny Christ to be real God, and yet they own the scripture to be the word of God as well as the Arians. 2nd, They say Christ did not die to satisfy divine justice for our sins, but only to confirm the truth of his doctrine, and to give us a good example. They deny a Trinity of persons in the

Deity; they deny original sin, and say that children sin by imitation, not from corrupt nature. The foundation of their errors is that they make reason the interpreter of scripture, and generally believe the soul sleeps with the body till the resurrection.

V. QUAKERS.

They did generally shake and quake at their first coming up, which was about fifty years ago, and thence had their name. They deny all ordinances, and say, they are above them. 3d. They affirm perfection in this life, and deny that Jesus Christ, who died at Jerusalem, to be true God. They own a light within, which they call Christ and God, and say it is in every man if he would attend to it, and they follow the motions of this light within in all their actions. This gives them the name of Enthusiasts. Though they do not utterly deny scripture, yet speak meanly of it, say it is a dead letter, and that they do not need it, because they have the Holy Spirit in them, &c.; they deny honour, and therefore they salute none. In their first rise they had a great many mad frantic fits, and strange. They are lately divided into two sects, one of them follow Penn, of the notions aforementioned, the other George Keith and Mead; and it is said, they own Christ the Son of God, satisfaction by him, and justification through him, and are by little and little leaving the old Quakers' principles.

VI. PAPISTS.

They deny original sin in that extent as Calvinists own it; also justification by faith alone, perseverance, assurance, &c. They own the doctrine of meritorious works, tradition of equal authority to scripture, the worship of God by images and transubstantiation, the constant sacrifice of the mass, perfection in this life, and works of superogation, invocation of saints, prayer for the dead, implicit faith, or believing whatever the pope says, purgatory, the pope's supremacy over the church, seven sacraments, and other things contrary to the reformed churches.

VII. ARMINIANS.

There was one Pelagius of old, that invented several opinions about free-will, and against free-grace; those that followed him strictly were called Pelagians; those that allowed more to free-grace were called Semi-Pelagians, almost the same with modern Arminians, called also Remonstrants, and by the common people Free-willers. Their notions are, that God elects none to salvation but on the account of that faith he foresees in them. 2nd, That faith and sincere obedience are made the conditions of justification and salvation, just as Adam's perfect obedience would have entitled him to eternal life, and so God reputes this imperfect obedience for perfect, having released the rigour of the law upon the account of Christ's satisfaction, that God sent him to die without any particular design to save any particular person by it, but only to redeem all men in general, and now he applies salvation to all that believe and repent. That Christ so far redeemed all men, that none shall be condemned for original sin; nay, they are ready to say, there is no original sin, or at least nothing in that extent, as Calvinists make it, that a natural man may use common grace, so as to attain saving grace and at last salvation. That all the grace that God gives towards the conversion of a sinner, is nothing but persuading him and enlightening his understanding; but some go farther and say, that God gives some little touches to the will of man, to move him to believe and

repent, but all of them say, that after all a man is left indifferent. They say God gives a believer grace enough to persevere, but he may not use it, and so fall. That there is no certainty of perseverance in this life, and consequently no certainty of salvation without particular revelation.

VIII. SABBATARIANS.

There are those who go by the name of Seventh-day-men, because they suppose the Jewish sabbath is not abolished, and therefore they observe our Saturday for their sabbath. They are against baptizing infants. Many of them now only assert a happy state of the church to be expected.

IX. ANABAPTISTS.

They differ not from Calvinists in their doctrine, unless in the article of infant baptism. They generally deny any children to be the covenant of grace, and so deny the seal of the covenant to them. They deny baptism by sprinkling to be real and true baptism. In church government generally Independents.

X. CALVINISTS.

So called from John Calvin, a great reformer; his doctrine the same with the Assembly's Confession of Faith.

XI. BAXTERIANS.

From Mr. Richard Baxter, whose design was to reconcile Calvin and Arminius; his Body of Divinity is part of the one and part of the other. The one God has elected some which shall certainly be saved, and others to whom the gospel is preached have sufficient grace given them; that is, they have common grace, which if they improve well they shall have saving grace according to Arminius. They own, according to Calvin, the merits of Christ's death to be applied to believers only; but also that all men are in a state capable of salvation. Mr. Baxter says, there may be a certainty of perseverance here, and yet he cannot tell whether a man may not have so weak a degree of saving grace as to lose it again: a-kin to Arminius.

But so long as Mr. Baxter owns no salvation, but by the salvation of and merits of Christ, and no application of these without believing, and no true faith but what is the gift of God: hence there is sufficient ground to believe that his opinions, and his followers, who are generally not so wide as himself, are not so exceeding dangerous as some men think them, and we may believe them true christians, though they may differ in many things from the confession of faith, and the general opinions of the reformers and reformed churches.

XII. ANTINOMIANS.

Those called Antinomians now-a-days take not so much care in expressing the Calvinistic doctrine, which most of them pretend to own, and so vent dangerous errors under such dangerous expressions as these: 1st, That God sees no sin in his people, and therefore saints need not ask pardon. 2d, Christ was a murderer, a blasphemer, &c. because he had those sins imputed to him. Christ believed and repented for us as well as died for us. We must not try our assurance or the goodness of our estate by our

graces or sanctification; there is no use of the law in driving a man to Christ, and therefore not to be preached. God loves a man never the better for holiness nor an elect person the worse for unholiness; Christ is a believing sanctification, so far that he need not seek it in himself to evidence justification: Faith is not so properly an acceptance of Christ as an assurance that he is ours.

The several opinions about religion are, secondly, in respect of discipline and order. The three chief in England at present are called by the names of Episcopacy, Presbytery, and Independency.

I. EPISCOPACY.

These are those called Conformists, or the Church of England. 1st, They own that a bishop is an officer appointed by Christ to oversee churches and their pastors, and in their hands are placed the keys of admission and excommunication of every particular church. 2d, All ordination of ministers ought to be by bishops. 3d, That the church, or these heads of it, have power to impose ceremonies. 4th, Hence they worship God in a ceremonious way; as the cross in baptism, bowing at the high altar, kneeling at the sacrament, the surplice, and many other things testify. 5th, They not only allow, but impose forms of prayer, and use little else. 6th, Though their great pretensions and chief subjects of their sermons be peace and love, and unity; though they own these ceremonies to be indifferent in their nature, and believe the Dissenters worship God aright; yet have they almost persecuted them to death for not conforming. But it is hoped this persecuting tenet does not belong to their church, but only was authorized and encouraged by men of power.

II. PRESBYTERY.

The true and original notion of Presbytery is, that God hath appointed a synod, or class, or assembly of ministers, or elders, to be superior in power and government to any particular church or officers thereof. 2d, That these synods, or councils, have power ministerially to determine controversies in faith and discipline, and that any person in a church may appeal to them for any injury received from any church; but this opinion is almost worn off in England. The tenets of the Presbyterians of our times and day are: 1st, That a minister ought to be ordained by the laying of the hands of other elders or ministers after examination, fasting, and prayer. 2d, That a minister may be ordained so as to have power given him to administer ordinances in general, even before he takes the charge of the church upon him. 3d, That there is no need of any new ordination when they are called to a particular congregation. 4th, That it is the office of a minister to rule in the church, and the people's duty to consent, though generally the minister will not do any thing in the church without their consent. 5th, If all the church are willing any church act should be done, yet it must not be done without consent of the minister. This is called the minister's having a negative voice, but this is contrary to rigid Independents. 6th, Their doctrine is generally Calvinistical, but many of those who are called Presbyterians have of late years inclined more to Mr. Baxter. 7th, They preach, that good knowledge and a sober conversation are not sufficient evidences of a good state; and yet usually enquire no farther than of the knowledge and conversation of those they admit into their churches; hence it follows, they are larger in church disci-

pline than Independents. 8th, Most of them own the office of deacons in a church, but generally deny any ruling elders distinct from ministers, and yet many of them think it convenient to choose two or three men of their church to inspect the conversations of others.

III. INDEPENDENTS.

There were some of the Independents heretofore called Brownists, some of whom were very irregular in the management of church affairs, but they are not to be found now: the tenets of rigid Independents are; 1st, That every church hath all the power of governing itself in itself, and that every thing done in a church must be by the majority of the votes of the brethren. 2nd, That every church has its minister ordained to itself, and that he cannot administer the ordinances to any other people, and if he preaches among others it is but as a gifted brother. But the generality of Independents follow rather Dr. Owen's notions; their tenets are such as these: 1st, That the power of church government resides in the pastors and elders of every particular church, and that it is the duty of the people to consent; and, nevertheless, because every act in a church is a church act, they never do any thing without the consent of the people, though they receive no new authority by the people's consenting. 3rd, They generally think a minister not to be ordained but to a particular church, though many of them now think, that by virtue of communion of churches, he may preach authoritatively, and administer the ordinances to other churches upon extraordinary occasions. 4th, That it is not absolutely necessary that a minister be ordained by the imposition of hands of other ministers, but only requisite that other ministers should be there present as advisers and assistants when he is ordained by the church; that is, set apart by their choice, his acceptance, mutual fasting and prayer. 5th, They generally hold more to the doctrine of Calvin than Presbyterians do. 6th, They think it not sufficient ground to be admitted a member, if the person be only examined as to his doctrinal knowledge and sobriety of conversation; but they require with all some hints, or means, or evidences of the work of grace on their souls, to be professed by them, and that not only to the minister but to the elders also, who are joint rulers in the church. Though this profession of some of their experience is generally made first to the minister, either by word or writing, but the elders always hear it and are satisfied before the person is admitted a member. 7th, These relations, which the independents require, are not (as some think) of the word, or scripture, or time, or place, or sermon, by which they were converted; for very few can tell this; but only they discourse and examine them a little of the way of their conviction of sin, of their being brought to know Christ; or at least ask them what evidences they can give why they hope they are true believers, and try to search whether there be sincerity in the heart, as much as may be found by outward profession, that they may, as much as in them lies, exclude hypocrites.*

* For a more full account of these and other sects, corrected to the present time, see *Adams's* View of all Religions, lately published.

SERMONS

SERMONS

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

DIVINE AND MORAL:

WITH

A SACRED HYMN,

SUITED TO EACH SUBJECT.

DEDICATION

PREFIXED TO THE FIRST VOLUME.

To the Church of Christ assembling in Berry-Street, London.

Christian Friends, dearly beloved in our Lord,

IT is in the service of your souls that I have spent the best period of my life, ministering the gospel among you. Two and twenty years are now expired, since you first called me to this delightful work; and from that time my cares and labours, my studies and prayers, have been employed in your behalf. I trust they have been accepted with God, and, through his almighty blessing, have obtained some success. As to their acceptance with you, I have too many and plain evidences to admit a doubt of it: which I have often thankfully acknowledged to God and you. Your forward kindness hath always forbid my request, nor do I remember that you ever gave me leave to ask any thing for myself at your hands, by your constant anticipation of all that I could reasonably desire.

While I was thus walking among you in the fellowship of the gospel with mutual delight, God was pleased to weaken my strength in the way, and thereby has given you a fairer opportunity to shew the vigour of your affection under my long weakness and confinement. Your diligence and zeal in maintaining public worship in the church, under the pastoral care of my dear brother and colleague,* in your special days and hours of prayer for my recovery, your constant and fervent addresses to the throne of grace on my account in your weekly solemn assemblies, and your cheerful supply of my necessities under so tedious an affliction, have made me your debtor in a high degree, and have strengthened the bands of my duty, by adding to them the bands of your love.

As soon as I was capable of the smallest attempt of service, you received me with all joy in the Lord: And though we were rivals in this pleasure, yet you will allow that my joy was, at least, equal to yours; for I think I can pronounce it with great sincerity, that "there is no place, nor company, nor employment, on this side heaven, that can give me such a relish of delight, as when I stand ministering holy things in the midst of you."

As fast as my health increases, you may assure yourselves it is devoted to your edification. It often grieves me to think how poor, feeble, and short are my present labours

* Mr. Samuel Price.

among you; and yet what days of faintness I generally feel after every such attempt: So that I am continually prevented in my design of successive visits to you, by the want of active spirits while I tarry in the city; and if I attempt to stay but a week or ten days there, I find a sensible return of weakness; so that I am constrained to retire to the country air, in order to recruit and maintain this little capacity of service.

I bless God heartily, and you are my witnesses, that in my better seasons of health heretofore, and in the intervals of my studies, I was not a stranger of your private families, nor thoughtless of your souls' improvement.

What shall I do now to make up these defects? What can I do more pleasing and profitable to you, than to seize the advantages of my retirement, to review some of those discourses which have assisted your faith and joy in my former ministry, and to put them into your hands: Thus something of me shall abide with you in your several houses, while I am so incapable of much public labour, and of personal visits.

This, my friends, is the true design of sending this volume to the press: And though many of my brethren may compose far better sermons than I, whose persons I love and honour, and their labours I read with reverence and improvement, yet I am persuaded, that share which I have in your affections, will render these discourses at least as agreeable to your taste, as those of superior excellency from other hands. If any other christians shall think fit to peruse them, and find any spiritual benefit, they must make their acknowledgments to God and you.

I cannot invite the loose and fashionable part of mankind, the vain censors of the age, and the deriders of the ministry, to become my readers: Too many of them grow weary of christianity, and look back upon heathenism with a wishful eye, as the Jews did of old upon the leeks and onions of Egypt, when they grew angry with Moses, and began to loathe the bread of heaven: These persons will find but little here that suits their taste; for I have not entertained you with lectures of philosophy, instead of the gospel of Christ; nor have I affected that easy indolence of style, which is the dry delight of some modish writers, the cold and insipid pleasure of men who pretend to politeness. You know it has always been the business of my ministry to convince and persuade your souls into practical godliness, by the clearest and strongest reasons derived from the gospel, and by all the most moving methods of speech, of which I was capable; but still in a humble subserviency to the promised influences of the Holy Spirit. I ever thought it my duty to press the conviction with force on the conscience, when light was first let into the mind. A statue hung round with moral sentences, or a marble pillar with divine truths inscribed upon it, may preach coldly to the understanding, while devotion freezes at the heart: But the prophets and apostles were *burning and shining lights;* they were all taught by inspiration to make the words of truth glitter like sunbeams, and to operate like a *hammer*, and *a fire*, and *a two-edged sword.** The movements of sacred passion may be the ridicule of an age which pretends

* 2 Cor. iv. 4, 6. John v. 35. Jer. xxiii. 29. Heb. iv. 12.

to nothing but calm reasoning. Life and zeal in the ministry of the word, may be despised by men of lukewarm and dying religion: *Fervency of spirit in the service of the Lord,** may become the scoff and jest of the critic and the profane: But this very life and zeal, this sacred fervency, shall still remain one bright character of a christian preacher, till the names of Paul and Apollos perish from the church; and that is, till this Bible and these heavens are no more.

In some of these discourses, indeed, I have not had the opportunity of so warm and affectionate an address to the hearers. A true and just explication of scripture, and a convincing proof of the doctrine proposed, have been the chief things necessary; yet I have endeavoured, even there, to give a practical and pathetic turn, as far as the design of the text would bear it: But in the other sermons I blame myself more for the want of zeal and devout passion, than for the excess of it.

I will readily confess, there are here and there some periods where the language appears a little too elevated, though not too warm; I know it is not the proper style of the pulpit; but there is some difference between speaking and writing. In one the ear must take in the sense at once; in the other the eye may review what the first glance did not fully receive. Besides, my friendly readers will now and then indulge a metaphor to one who, from his youngest years, has dealt a little in sacred poesy.

You are my witnesses, that in the common course of my ministry, I often press the duties of sobriety and temperance, justice and charity, as well as the inward and spiritual parts of godliness. But since treatises on the latter subjects are seldom published now-a-days, I have permitted the matters of secret converse between God and the holy soul to take up a larger share in these discourses; and it has been my aim to rescue these arguments from the charge of enthusiasm, and to put them in such a light, as might shew their perfect consistence with common sense and reason. Hereby I have done my part to defend them against the daily cavils of those low pretenders to christianity, who banish most of these things from their religion, and yet arrogate and confine all reason to themselves.

It is necessary that a christian preacher should teach the laws of sobriety, the rules of charity and justice, our duty to our neighbour, and our practice of public religion; but it is my opinion that discourses of experimental piety, and the work of the closet, should also sometimes entertain the church and the world. Our fathers talked much of pious experience, and have left their writings of the same strain behind them: They were surrounded with converts, and helped to fill heaven apace; for God was with them. But I mourn to think that some are grown so degenerate in our days, as to join their names and their works together in a common jest, and to ridicule the sacred matter of their sermons, because the manner had now and then something in it too mystical and obscure, and there is something in their style unfashionable and unpolished.

* Acts xviii. 25. Rom. xii. 11.

It must be acknowledged, indeed, to the honour of the present age, that we have some pretences above our predecessors to freedom and justness of thought, to strength of reasoning, to clear ideas, to the generous principles of christian charity; and I wish we had the practice of it too. But as to the savour of piety and inward religion, as to spiritual-mindedness, and zeal for God, and the good of souls; as to the spirit and power of evangelical ministrations, we may all complain, the glory is much departed from our Israel. Happy the men, who are so far assisted and favoured of God, as to unite all these excellencies, and to join the honours of the past and present age together! How far it has been attempted amongst you, I have a witness in your consciences; and though I keep a sincere and painful sense within me of my great defects on either side, yet I must still pursue the same attempt; and with reverence and zeal I beg leave to trace the footsteps of my brethren, who come nearest to this shining character.

In all these things I rejoice, and cannot conceal my joy, that my kind and faithful companion in the service of your souls, practises his ministry with the same views and designs; and he hath been sensibly owned and assisted of God, to support, and to build up the church, during my long confinement. His labours of love both for you and for me, shall ever endear him both to me and you. May the divine blessing gloriously attend his double services in the seasons of my absence and painful restraint! May your united prayers prevail for my restoration to the full exercise of my ministry among you! And may you all receive such lasting benefit by our associated labours, that you may stand up and appear as our crown and our joy in the great day of the Lord! This is the continual and hearty prayer of,

My dear Friends,

Your affectionate and afflicted

Servant in the gospel,

I. WATTS.

Theobalds in Hertfordshire,
February 21, 1720—21.

THE PREFACE.*

I AM bound to give thanks to God always, for the acceptance that my sermons have found among the more pious and religious part of mankind. As it hath been the chief design of my ministry to explain the common and most important things of our religion, to the understanding of every christian, and to impress the most necessary duties of it on the spirit and conscience, so when I am solicited to make my labours yet more public, I would repeat the same work; I would fain give my readers the clearest conceptions of some of the great articles of christianity, and draw out the plain principles of truth which are in the head, to a powerful and holy influence over the heart and life.

These discourses have but a little hope to gratify those curious minds, who turn over the leaves superficially, to search if there be any new discoveries in them, and being disappointed, lay down the book with disdain: My chief intent was to entertain and assist those humble christians, who converse in secret with God and their own souls.

And since it is the custom of many persons to read a sermon in the evening of the Lord's-day, as part of their family worship, I was desirous also to suit the sermons which I publish to such a pious service. Now when the discourses which are rehearsed in families have much of criticism and speculation in them, or long and difficult trains of reasoning, every one may observe, what a negligent air sits upon the faces of the hearers, what a drowsy attention is given to this religious exercise, and the greatest part of the household find very little improvement.

I grant, it is sometimes necessary to preach and print such discourses which are more critical and laborious in exposition of difficult texts, and which, by artificial trains of argument, may penetrate deep into the hidden things of God, and *bring forth things new as well as old.* But I am content to wave the honour of such performances in the more general course of my labours, whether of the pulpit or the press, and chiefly to pursue those methods which more directly tend to the edification of the bulk of mankind in the knowledge of Christ, and in practical godliness.

We are too often ready to judge that to be the best sermon, which has many strange thoughts in it, many fine hints, and some grand and polite sentiments. But a christian in his best temper of mind will say, "That is a good sermon which brings my heart nearer to God, which makes the grace of Christ sweet to my soul, and the commands of Christ easy and delightful: That is an excellent discourse, indeed, which enables me to mortify some unruly sin, to vanquish a strong temptation, and weans me from all the enticements of this lower world; that which bears me up above all the disquietudes of life, which fits me for the hour of death, and makes me ready and desirous to appear

* In the fifth edition, the three volumes in 12mo were reduced into two in 8vo, and the prefaces abridged and united by the author.

before Christ Jesus my Lord." If the publication of these discourses shall be so happy, as through the influence of the blessed Spirit to attain these ends, I have obtained my best aim and hope, and will ascribe the glory to God my Saviour.

The first sermons which I published,* were taken up chiefly in the more spiritual parts of our religion, and such as relate more immediately to the secret transactions of the soul with God, and with his Son Jesus Christ. In several following discourses, I have attempted to explain many duties of the christian life which refer to our fellow-creatures. I hope no man who loves the gospel of Christ will knit his brow, and throw disgrace upon the book, with a contempt of dull morality: If such a person would give himself leave to peruse these sermons, perhaps he would meet with so much of Christ and the gospel in them, that he might learn to love his Saviour better than ever he did, and find how necessary moral duties are to make his own religion either safe or honourable: While *we are saved by faith* in the blood and righteousness of the Son of God, we must remember also, that it is such a *faith as worketh by love*, for *faith without works is dead*, and useless to all purposes of hope and salvation.

My design in these sermons is to represent vice and virtue in their proper colours. I foresee that many readers will quickly spy out their neighbours' names amongst the vicious or unlovely characters; but it would turn perhaps to their better account, if they can find their own; for there is many a description here that a hundred persons may lay a righteous claim to. It was my business to set a faithful glass before the face of conscience, by which we may examine ourselves, and learn *what manner of persons we are;* and I pray God to keep it daily before my own eyes. I acknowledge my defects, and stand corrected in many of my own sermons. Blessed be God for a Mediator, who is *exalted to give repentance and forgiveness of sins!*

Yet it may not be an improper or unsuccessful method of reproof, to fold down a useful leaf now and then for a friend, and give him notice in such an inoffensive manner of any blemishes that may belong to his character. Thus the silent page shall bestow upon him the richest benefit of friendship; it may whisper in his ear a secret word of admonition, and convey it to his conscience without offence. Such a gentle monitor may awaken him to inward shame and penitence; may rouse his virtue to shine brighter than ever, and scatter the clouds that hung dark upon the evidence of his graces.

Since I first published these discourses,† the world has been furnished with a more complete account of most of these subjects, in that excellent treatise, called the "Christian Temper," which my worthy friend, Dr. Evans, hath sent abroad, and which is, perhaps, the most complete summary of those duties which make up the christian life, that hath been published in our age.

The next three sermons are employed on that divine subject, which I am ready to call the chief wonder and glory of the christian religion; that is, "the great atonement for sin made by the death of Christ, and the practical uses derived thence."‡ This is the

* February 21, 1720—21. † March 25, 1723. ‡ They were first published March 25, 1727.

blessed foundation of our hope, which I have endeavoured to set in a clear light, and to support by reasoning drawn from the types and predictions of the Old Testament, and the clearer language of the New. This is that grace and that righteousness which was witnessed by the law and the prophets, as St. Paul expresses it, *Rom.* iii. 24. This is that important work of the blessed Saviour, who was promised to the guilty world ever since the fall, and whose various glories have been well represented, according to ancient prophecy, in a happy correspondence with the doctrine of the New Testament, by a volume of " Discourses on the Messiah," lately published by Dr. William Harris. I wonder how any man can read all these correspondencies of the type, prophecy, and history, and not be convinced that Jesus was the appointed Saviour of the world.

The several sermons that follow next, are all formed upon some of the most momentous concerns of a christian, *viz.* how to improve every thing for the advantage of our own souls; how to look on all things as working for our good; how to employ the time of life to noble purposes, and such as the saints above can never be employed in; and to improve the death of others to valuable ends in the christian life, and especially to a preparation for our own departure. The death of that worthy gentleman and excellent christian, Sir Thomas Abney, gave the first occasion to some of these meditations, for the use of the mourning family, which were much amplified afterwards in my public ministry. Here I have endeavoured to awaken myself and my friends to an immediate and constant readiness for a dismission from this sinful, and sorrowful, and tempting world: And God grant, when that awful hour approaches, I may be so far honoured by divine grace, as to become an example as well as a teacher.

The last discourse of all, exhibits the " most plain and obvious representation of the doctrine of the blessed Trinity, as it lies in the Bible, and the great and necessary use that is to be made of it in our religion." It is a doctrine that runs through the whole of our serious transactions with God, and therefore it is necessary to be known by men. Without the mediation of the Son, and the influences of the Spirit, we can find no way of access to the Father, nor is there any other hope of his favour proposed in the gospel.

I thought it proper also to publish it at this season, to let the world know, that though I have entered into some further enquiries on this divine subject, and made humble attempts to gain clearer ideas of it, in order to vindicate the truth and glory of this sacred article, yet I have never changed my belief and profession of any necessary and important part of it, as will here appear with abundant evidence.

In this sermon I have followed the track of no particular scheme whatsoever; but have represented the sacred Three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in that light in which they seem to lie most open to the common view of mankind in the word of God: And I am glad to find what I have drawn out in this manner, in seventeen propositions, appears so agreeable to the general sense of our fathers in this article, that I do not think any one of these propositions would be denied or disputed by our

divines of the last or present age, who have had the greatest name and reputation of strict orthodoxy.*

If I may express the substance of it in a few words, it is this: It seems to me to be plainly and evidently revealed in scripture, "That both the Son and the Holy Ghost have such a communion in the true and eternal Godhead, as to have the same names, titles, attributes, and operations ascribed to them, which are elsewhere ascribed to the Father, and which belong only to the true God: And yet that there is such a plain distinction between them, as is sufficient to support their distinct personal characters and offices in the great work of our salvation;" And this is what has been generally called the Trinitarian doctrine, or the doctrine of three persons and one God.

At the end of all the latter sermons I have endeavoured to assist christians in the devout recollection of what they hear or read in a way of pious converse with their own hearts, and with God. In most of those meditations, the reader will find the principal heads of the foregoing sermons rehearsed.

Where the sermons are too long to be read in a family at once, I have marked out proper pauses, that the religious service may not be made tedious. May the great God vouchsafe to send his own Almighty Spirit, wheresoever his providence shall disperse these weak labours of mine in the world, and attend them with his sovereign power and blessing for the welfare of immortal souls! *Amen.*

* In this complete collection of the author's works there are large additions, as well as many alterations, inserted in this sermon "On the Doctrine of the Trinity," from the author's manuscripts. 1734.

SERMONS.

SERMON I.

THE INWARD WITNESS TO CHRISTIANITY

1 JOHN v. 10.

HE THAT BELIEVETH ON THE SON OF GOD, HATH THE WITNESS IN HIMSELF.

THE FIRST PART.

THERE are two points of great and solemn importance, which it becomes every man to inquire into: First, Whether the religion he professes be true and divine; and then, Whether he has so far complied with the rules of this religion, as to stand entitled to the blessings thereof.

The christians of our age and nation, have been nursed up amongst the forms of christianity from their childhood; they take it for granted their religion is divine and true, and therefore seldom enter into the *first* inquiry: but when they come to think in good earnest about religious affairs, their great concern is with the *second*, viz. to know whether they have so far complied with the rules of the gospel of Christ, as to obtain an interest in the promised blessings of it. And when they hear such a text as this, *He that believeth, hath the witness in himself;* they immediately expect that the meaning and design of it should be to *witness* the truth of their own faith, and consequently to prove their own title to salvation.

But in the first christian age the case was far otherwise. The gospel itself was not then universally established, and the disciples of this new religion might have frequent doubts in their own minds concerning the truth of it, while they saw it disallowed and opposed by the world round about them. It was evidently necessary therefore, for them to inquire, whether it came from God or no? And it is with this view the apostle John writes these words, *He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself;* viz. *he* hath a proof within himself that *eternal life is in the Son*, ver. 11. and is to be obtained by our believing in him. It is to the truth of this doctrine that the *three bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and the three on earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood.* And though the proof of the sincerity and truth of our faith now may be derived from hence by a further consequence, yet the first and direct design of the apostle is to shew, that the truth and divinity of our religion has an inward witness to it in the heart of every believer.

Here give me leave to put you in mind, that it is necessary for you, as it was for the primitive christians, to settle your profession of christianity upon solid grounds; other-

wise you are christians but for the same reason that makes a Turk a disciple of Mahomet, or a heathen a worshipper of the gods of his country; that is, because you were born in such a climate, and under such a meridian. And can you be contented with so poor a pretence to the noblest religion? and lay so sandy a foundation for your eternal hopes? Besides, the day in which we live, threatens you with bold temptations; and how will you stand if you have no surer grounds? Infidelity is a growing weed; the contempt and ridicule of revealed religion flourish and become fashionable among the gay part of the world; and if you are not furnished with some solid proofs of the gospel of Christ, you may be in great danger of losing your faith; you may be tempted to yield up your religion to a witty jest, and become a heathen for company.

I might say another thing to awaken you to acquaint yourselves with some arguments that will justify and support your belief of the gospel. Suppose you think you have complied with the rules of your religion, and have raised your hopes of heaven to a high degree; should Satan the tempter spread his darkness round your souls, and in a melancholy and gloomy hour assault your faith with such bold questions as these, *How do you know that christianity is the true religion? What tokens have you to shew that it came from God?* If you have no other answer to make, but that *it is the religion of your country*, that *you are born and bred up in it*, think with yourselves how your spirits will be surprised, your comforts languish, and all your high-built hopes totter to the ground; unless the Spirit of God, by his uncommon and sovereign grace, should give in an answer to the temptation, and by some immediate and convincing argument support your faith; but if you are negligent to lay a good foundation at first, you have no reason to expect such a divine favour.

Let the importance of this concern therefore keep your attention awake, while I briefly run over some of the proofs of christianity, and thus lead you down to the surest and best of them, which is contained in my text.

Many are the outward testimonies which God hath given to the gospel of his Son; many witnesses have confirmed it from the time that Christ appeared in the flesh, to the day when St. John wrote this epistle. If we trace his life from the cradle in the manger to his cross and the grave, we shall find the rays of divinity still shining round his doctrine and his works, still pointing to his person, and proving his commission with a convincing and resistless light.

At his birth the witnessing angels appeared in much brightness, and while the Son of God lay an infant below, his record was on high; for there appeared a strange new star, and was his witness in heaven. The wise men of the East were his witnesses, when they came from afar, and paid tributes and offerings, gold and incense to the God, the king of Israel. Simeon and Anna in the temple, by the Spirit of prophecy witnessed to the holy child Jesus. And the doctors with whom he disputed at twelve years old, were his witnesses that there was something in him more than man. At his baptism the Father and the Spirit witnessed to the Son of God; they told the world that this was He, the Messiah: the Father by a voice from heaven, saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;* and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove. His life was a life of wonders, and each of them witnessed to the truth of his commission, and to the divinity of his doctrine. Every blind eye that he opened, saw and witnessed Jesus, and declared his divine power. Every one of the dead that he raised were his witnesses. They came from the land of silence to speak his

glory, and to give a loud testimony to his mission from heaven. The devils themselves, when he drove them out of their possessions, confessed that he was Christ *The holy one of God;* but he had no mind to accept their witness, and therefore forbad them to speak. Miracles attended him to the cross and the grave, and opened the grave again for him, and made a passage for him to his Father's right hand. Nor did the witnesses of his person and of his doctrine then cease; for *that salvation which began to be spoken by Jesus the Lord,* was afterwards published *by those that heard him, God himself bearing them witness with signs and wonders;* as in *Heb.* ii. 3, 4.

But all these still were outward witnesses to convince an unbelieving world. There is an inward witness that my text speaks of, that belongs to every true christian: *He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself.* And let us prepare now to examine whether our religion be true, and whether we are believers on the Son of God in truth, by searching after this inward witness; which we shall endeavour to explain, by considering these three things:

I. What believing on the Son of God means.—

II. What this inward witness is, that faith gives to christianity.—

III. What sort of witness it is, and how it exceeds other testimonies in several respects. And,

Lastly, We shall make some inferences.

I. What is meant in my text by *believing on the Son of God,* I answer briefly under these two heads. It is,—1. A believing Jesus Christ to be the Saviour of the world.—2. A trust in Christ Jesus as our Saviour.

1. It is *a believing* Jesus Christ *to be the Saviour of the world;* and in this manner it is often expressed by our apostle in these epistles: a belief that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, who was foretold by all the prophets, and represented by all the types and shadows of the Old Testament. This usually includes a belief of the most important things that are related in the gospel concerning his person; such as these, that he is true God and true man, *i. e.* that God and man are united in him; that he was the Son of God before all ages, and the son of man born in time. *That he was the seed of David after the flesh, but declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead,* Rom. i. 3, 4. That he is that eternal Word, who *in the beginning was with God, and was God,* and who was in due time *made flesh and tabernacled among us,* as in *John* i. 14. This is that *mystery of godliness* which we must believe, *God manifest in the flesh,* 1 Tim. iii. 16.

It implies also our belief of his doctrine, as well as of the divinity and humanity united in his Person; *viz.* That we are all sinners condemned by the law of God; enemies to God in our minds, transgressors in our lives, and exposed to eternal death: That the divine law is so strict, so perfect, so holy, and so just, that no mere man since the fall can fulfil it, nor yet can excuse or free himself from the condemnation of it: That Christ himself came *to fulfil this law,* as he tells us in *Matt.* v. 17, 18. That he came not only to perform the duties of it by an active obedience, but to put himself under the curse and condemnation for our sakes. Which the apostle to the Galatians expresses in this language, *that in the fulness of time he was made under the law* to become *a curse for us,* that we who are under the law *might*

be redeemed from the curse, and *receive a blessing*, Gal. iii. 13. and iv. 5. That *he died for our offences*, that *he rose again for our justification;* and that he has received the spirit of holiness, which he sends into our sinful natures, to form us fit for that heavenly inheritance which he hath purchased for us by his death. That without this purification of our natures, we can have no hope of heaven, for *without* repentance and *holiness no man shall see God.* That Jesus Christ our Lord shall raise the dead, shall come in the last day to judge the world, and pass a decisive sentence, and shall then *reward every one according to their works.* Though all these things were not so plainly taught by our Saviour himself in his public ministry in the world, yet these were the doctrines which his apostles preached continually, and they received them from him by private instructions, or the inspiration of his Spirit, so that they may be properly called the doctrines of Christ.

But this is not all that is required of believers; for so much knowledge, and so much faith as this is, the devils may have, and Simon Magus the sorcerer might have as much as this when he believed. The faith that is expressed in this epistle, and in other places of scripture, is more than a bare assent to the great truths of the gospel; for it is such a faith as *overcomes the world*, such a faith as *gains a victory* over things sensual, and over Satan; such a faith as evidences a man *to be born of God.* And therefore something more must be implied in it than a mere belief of the nature and person of Christ, and the truth of his doctrine.

2. It therefore implies a *betrusting the soul into the hands of Christ, that he may be our Saviour.* And I have sometimes thought that those words in the Greek, which we render *faith* and *believing*, are continually used in the New Testament, to signify *faith*, a *saving faith;* because they not only signify, in their natural sense, the *believing of a truth* but the *trusting in a person.* They signify believing the doctrine of Christ, and committing the soul into his hands as a Saviour, as it is expressed by St. Paul, 2 *Tim.* i. 12. *I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded he is able to keep what I have committed to him.* To *believe on the Son of God* therefore, is when a person, from a sense of sin and danger of eternal death, and his inability to escape any other way, applies himself unto Christ Jesus, as the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. When the soul commits itself into his hands, as one All-sufficient in himself to save, and one appointed by the Father for this glorious purpose. When the soul is made willing to be justified by the merits and righteousness of another, seeing itself unable, by all its own works, to attain to a justifying righteousness. When the soul is desirous to be sanctified by the grace that is from above, because it sees the necessity of holiness, and yet feels itself utterly uncapable to renew its own nature, to mortify its own sins, or to form itself fit for the enjoyment of God and heaven. When the soul for these ends, puts itself under the care of Christ Jesus, who is authorised and commissioned by the Father to take care of sinful and guilty souls, to remove and cancel their guilt by his sacrifice, and invest them with a perfect righteousness, to begin the work of grace in them, to fill them with principles of holiness, and by degrees to fit them for his glory; such a soul is a believer on the Son of God, and such a soul has the witness in himself, that our religion is divine, and that christianity is from above.

II. The second thing I proposed to consider, is, *What is this inward witness that faith gives to the truth of christianity?*

At the first promulgation of the gospel, there were some souls over-powered with present miracles, attended with a divine light shining into them. This was such as they could not resist, such as carried glorious evidence with it, and effectually wrought upon them to believe that our religion was from heaven, that Christ was the Son of God, and that his name was the only ground of hope for salvation. This was miraculous and extraordinary, and not to be expected every day now; such was the conversion of St. Paul to christianity, and many such instances of miracles appeared in the first seasons of the gospel.

But the witness that the apostle John speaks of in my text, is such as belongs to every believer. It is an universal proposition, *He that believes, has the witness in himself.*

In order therefore to enquire into the nature of this testimony, I shall not lead you, nor myself, into the land of blind enthusiasm, that region of clouds and darkness, that pretends to divine light. The apostle does not mean here a strong impulse, an irrational and ungrounded assurance that our religion is true. Many times these vehement impulses are but the foolish fires of fancy, that give the enquiring traveller no steady light or conduct, but lead him far astray from truth. Christianity has a better witness than this; being such as belongs to every believer, it must approve itself to the reason of men. And I will endeavour to explain it thus according to scripture.

Let it be first noted here, that the word *witness* is used frequently, by our translators, to signify *testimony*, or *evidence*. Nor will it create any confusion to use these words promiscuously in this discourse, while we distinguish them from the *thing witnessed*, (which, in the original, is also μαρτυρία) and is translated the *record*, ver. 10, 11.

Now if we enquire what is that *testimony* to christianity, or that *inward witness* that every believer has in himself, let us consider what that record is which God has testified concerning his Son Christ Jesus. That you will find in the context, *ver.* 11, 12. *This is the record* or thing witnessed, *that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son; he that hath the Son of God hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life.* He then that *believes on the Son of God hath the witness*, or testimony to christianity, in himself, for he hath within him the *thing testified.* He hath eternal life in himself, he hath this eternal life already begun, and it shall be carried on and fulfilled in the days of eternity. By believing in Christ, we have a glorious testimony, or witness, within ourselves, that Christ is the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, and the author of eternal life; that his person is divine, that his doctrine is true, for eternal life is begun in us.

We shall make this more fully appear, by considering what is *eternal life*, and shewing how far it is found in every believer, and how it becomes a witness of christianity in his heart.

Eternal life consists in *happiness* and *holiness;* it is made up of these two, and there is such a necessary connection between them, that they run into one another; but, for order-sake, I shall distinguish them thus.

The happiness of eternal life consists in the pardon of sin, in the special favour of God, and in the pleasure that arises from the regular operation of all our powers and

passions. Now these three things are, in some measure, found with every soul that believes in Christ.

The *happiness* of eternal life consists,——

I. *In the pardon of sin;* thence arises *peace of conscience.* This is a part of heaven; the perfection of this peace belongs to the heavenly state. Our pardon is complete on earth, but the sense of this pardon is not complete and free from all doubts, or at least from all danger of doubting, till we arrive at full glory. When a soul is made sensible, that all its iniquities are for ever cancelled, that God will never avenge any of his crimes upon him, when he knows that this God, who has a right to punish with everlasting revenge, is at peace, and will demand no more satisfaction for his sins; this soul then has the beginning of heaven. This is a part of final blessedness, and of complete eternal life.

Now this is, in some measure, found in believers here: They that have trusted in the Son of God, begin to find peace in their own consciences; they can hope God is reconciled to them through the blood of Christ, that their iniquities are atoned for, and that peace is made betwixt God and them. This belongs only to the doctrine of Christ, and witnesses it to be divine: for there is no religion that ever pretended to lay such a foundation of pardon and peace as the religion of the Son of God does; for he has made himself a propitiation: Jesus the righteous is become our reconciler by becoming a sacrifice: *Rom.* iii. 25. *Him hath God set forth for a propitiation, through faith in his blood; to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus: Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God.* Rom. v. 1. *Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world!* was the language of John, who was but the forerunner of our religion, and took a prospect of it at a little distance: And much more of the particular glories and blessings of this atonement is displayed by the blessed apostles, the followers of the Lamb.

Other religions, that have been drawn from the remains of the light of nature, or that have been invented by the superstitious fears and fancies of men, and obtruded on mankind by the craft of their fellow-creatures, are all at a loss in this instance, and can never speak solid peace and pardon.

1. The religion of the *Heathens*, and the best of philosophers, could never assure us *Whether God would pardon sin at all, or no.* The light of nature indeed would dictate thus much, that God is, in his own nature, gracious, and compassionate, and kind; but whether God would be gracious to you or me, compassionate to such ill-deserving sinners as we are, the light of nature could never determine. It is only the Son of God, that came down from the bosom of the Father, could so well inform us how the Father's heart worked towards such sinners, in the designs of pardon and reconciliation.

2. Again, the light of nature could never tell us, *How often God would pardon sinners.* Suppose it could be found out by reason, that God is so compassionate that he would forgive offences, yet it could never be inferred how often we could be forgiven; and if he had pardoned us once, we might for ever despair if we had committed new iniquities: For who but a divine messenger can tell us that he will often repeat his pardons.

3. The light of nature could never inform us *How great the offences were that could be forgiven;* reason could never tell us that rebellions of the biggest size, and treasons of the blackest aggravation, should be all cancelled; the light of nature could never say *All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to men.* This the Son of God only hath taught us, who came from the bosom of the Father, and who laid a foundation for the brightest displays of pardoning grace.

4. Reason, with all the principles of natural religion, could never teach us *what we must do to obtain pardon,* and on what terms God would forgive. Reason indeed might require us to repent of sin, but it could never assure us that *he that confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall find mercy.* Nor could it show us any mediator or reconciler between God and man, nor how, or in what manner, we must address ourselves to him, or to an offended God by him. Reason could never start a thought of this strange way of salvation, that we must believe or trust in another's sufferings, in order to the pardon of our own sins; that we must depend on the merits and righteousness of one that died, in order to obtain forgiveness and life; that *by faith in the blood of Christ, God will justify them that believe in Jesus.* What could the light of mere nature teach us concerning this Jesus? And yet *there is no other name under heaven whereby we can be saved.* Acts iv. 12.

5. The light of nature, or any religion invented by men, could never acquaint us *with the foundation of divine forgiveness,* nor shew us *any merit sufficient to procure it;* and in this sense we are left at a loss in all other religions, *upon what ground we could expect pardon from God:* For they knew nothing of an atonement equal to our guilt, nothing of a satisfaction great as our offences, and that could answer the high demands of infinite and offended justice. Mankind found out by reason, and by the stings and disquietudes of a guilty conscience, that there was an offended God in heaven; and in several countries they followed the dictates of a wild and uneasy imagination, inventing an endless variety of methods to appease the angry Deity. What multitudes of rams, and goats, and thousands of larger cattle, were cut to pieces, and burnt, to atone for the sins of men! What deluges of blood have overflowed their altars! What fanciful sprinklings, and vast effusions of wine and oil! The first-born son for the transgression of the father, and the fruit of the body for the sin of the soul! What cruel practices on their own flesh! What cuttings and burnings to procure pardon! And yet, after all, no true peace, nor reasonable hope.

The Jewish religion, indeed, was invented by God himself, and it contained in it the way of obtaining pardon, but it was veiled and darkened by many types and shadows: though it was not defective as to real pardon, yet it was very defective as to solid peace; therefore the apostle tells us, *Heb.* x. 1, 2, &c. *The law, having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never, with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect,* &c. The sense of which, compared with the following verses, is plainly this, *Those sacrifices, that were so often repeated, could never perfectly take away the conscience of guilt:* there still remained some trembling fears, some uneasy doubts, some painful concern of mind, whether their iniquities should be entirely cancelled or no; because they were convinced that the blood of bulls and goats could not do it, and they could not fully and plainly see the blood of Jesus, the Son of God,

the Saviour. Dark hints and obscure notices of such a Messiah and such a sacrifice, they had; but such a one as could not generally free their consciences from all sense of defilement, and guilt, and fears, though it cleansed their souls in the sight of God.

The Socinians, in our age, can have but very little solid comfort, if they are truly awakened to a spiritual sight of the law of God; for when they have nothing to plead with God, and nothing to trust in but his mere absolute mercy, while they deny the proper satisfaction of Christ Jesus, how weak must their hope be! how feeble is the foundation of it! But when a poor, convinced, awakened soul, that now believes the doctrine of Christ, has been long before tormented in his conscience about atonement for sin, and found no hope; the Christian religion, the gospel, with its pardoning grace, and the satisfaction that Christ has made, gives the soul peace, and leads the troubled conscience to rest and quiet; he trusts this gospel, he receives this salvation, and hath the witness in himself that it is divine.

II. The happiness of eternal life consists also in the *special favour of God*, which is distinct from the *pardon of sin;* for it is very possible for a criminal to be pardoned, and not to be made a favourite of the king. The favour of God, and a sense of this favour, is a great part of heaven. This is called seeing of God, often in scripture. When souls are fully possessed of the love of God; when they have it shed abroad in their hearts in perfection; when they know that the infinite and eternal Maker and Governor of all things loves them, and will for ever love them, this is eternal life; and this is enjoyed in some measure here on earth by true believers. This is a part of eternal life, begun in the heart of every christian; for when God pardons, he receives into his peculiar favour.

This the Christian religion teaches us, but the light of nature could never tell us so: for if the light of nature and reason could have proceeded so far as to acquaint us with pardoning grace in all the extent of it, yet it could never have presumed to assure us, *That he should make the rebels he had pardoned his favourites for ever.* We might have been forgiven and then annihilated. But the scripture teaches us, whom God forgives he makes favourites too. And Christ Jesus has laid the foundation of this double blessing; for he has not only made an *end of sin*, but *brought in an everlasting righteousness*, Dan. ix. 24. He has fulfilled the law in all the commands of it, as well as borne the penalty: he has purchased all the blessings of divine love, as well as bought a freedom from divine vengeance. *If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.* Rom. v. 10. And in *ver.* 1 and 2 he saith, *Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* Thus you see there is not only *reconciliation,* but *full salvation;* not only *peace with God*, but the *hope of glory* to be obtained by believing on the Son of God. Many are the instances of saints here dwelling in flesh, in a day of grace, that have been raised to a good degree of eternal life in this respect, that have had a joyful sense of the love of God shed abroad in their souls, and upon solid grounds have hoped for glory, such as no other religion could pretend to furnish them with; and this is a witness to the truth of Christianity.

No mere human religion can pretend to tell how this special love of God may be attained, no human religion can ever tell us how long this love of God shall

continue; but the word of God gives us full evidence and assurance, that the worst of sinners, who apply to Jesus Christ the Saviour, in the way of humble faith and hearty repentance, shall not only be forgiven and released from the guilt of sin and punishment, but also shall be beloved of God for the sake of Christ, and that this divine love is everlasting. Read *Acts* iii. 19. *Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out. Acts* xvi. 31. *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.* And when persons are interested in these promises, who shall lay any thing to their charge? Who shall condemn them when God justifies? Who shall separate them from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress, famine or sword? No, by no means; *for in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that has loved us;* and we are *persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, Rom.* viii. 38, &c.

When a rational mind is awakened to see the emptiness of all creatures, and their insufficiency to make him happy, and finds nothing but the eternal love of God capable to make a creature truly blessed; how miserably must that soul be tormented, that knows not whether God will love him or no, nor how this love may be attained; nor, when once attained, how long this love will continue! But he finds an answer to all these painful questions in the gospel of Christ: For the Father loves the Son infinitely, and loves all those that believe on him, for his sake; they are for ever accepted in him who is first and for ever accepted; and they are beloved in him who is first and for ever beloved; *Eph.* i. 6.

III. The happiness of eternal life consists in the pleasure that arises from the regular operation of all our powers and passions. This was a great part of the happiness of the innocent man; his reason was the guide to all his meaner faculties, and his appetites and his affections in a sweet harmony followed the conduct of his reason: And as his understanding and judgment put forth their regular dictates, so the meaner powers paid a constant obedience, and pursued their proper objects. There was no irregular anger to set his blood on fire; no intemperate and corrupt wishes to vitiate his nature, to pollute his pleasures, and disturb his peace; none of those tumults and hurricanes in his soul, which we so often feel in our fallen state, and lament them much oftener than we can suppress them. And as the fancy and appetites of innocent Adam submitted to his reason, so, doubtless, if his Maker were pleased to reveal any sublimer truth to him, which his reason could not comprehend, then reason itself submitted to that revelation, believed the word of a speaking God. and resigned the throne to faith. His natural powers had no uneasy contest, there was no civil war nor rebellion amongst them to interrupt his happiness.

And thus shall it be again, but in a more glorious manner, when we are raised from all the ruins of our fallen state, and eternal life is made complete in heaven.

But before we arrive at that final glory, the same sort of happiness is begun in every believer in a state of grace. These are the beginnings of eternal life, the earnests and the pledges of the perfect blessedness which we hope for; and this arises from our faith in the Son of God. For when we have attained a good hope of forgiving grace through the blood of Christ, and believe that we are beloved of God

our Maker, what have we then to do but to abide in his love? We learn to despise those tempting objects that would awaken our intemperate passions, and walk onward in peace and pleasure towards our complete felicity. For since God is become our God through the mediation of his Son, we have no need to seek the meaner delights of sense and appetite, because we possess the supreme. We have the Son of God himself for our leader and example, and he that believes on the Son of God, walks as he also walked.

Besides these moral or persuasive helps that belong to the Christian life, we have also the Spirit of God given to reform our natures, to put all our misplaced and disjointed powers into their proper order again, and to maintain this divine harmony and peace. It is the blessed Spirit that inclines reason to submit to faith, and makes the lower faculties submit to reason, and obey the will of our Maker, and then gives us the pleasure of it. And if at any time, through the power of temptation, the violence of appetite, and the imperfection of grace, this blessed harmony and order be disturbed, and this pleasure interrupted; the soul of the Christian is never easy till it rise again by repentance, and recur to the Son of God, to fetch new and vigorous supplies of the Spirit, and of this eternal life from him, and thereby it regains its peace and pleasure.

But these thoughts naturally lead me on to the second part of this subject, *viz.* holiness.

Thus much shall suffice, therefore, concerning the first part of eternal life, which consists in happiness, *viz.* pardon of sin, peace of conscience, the favour of God, the sense of his love, and the pleasurable harmony of our natural powers. These are found in true believers, and this is a noble witness to Christianity, to prove it divine.

SERMON II.

THE INWARD WITNESS TO CHRISTIANITY.

1 JOHN v. 10.

HE THAT BELIEVETH ON THE SON OF GOD, HATH THE WITNESS IN HIMSELF.

THE SECOND PART.

WHEN such a text as this is named for the foundation of discourse, some nicer hearers begin to grow jealous, that the preacher is entering into mystery and inward light, and they expect to hear no clear and solid reasoning, nor any justness of thought. Thus blinded by their own prejudices, they prevent their improvement by the ministry of the word; and because they have heard the experiences of christians wittily ridiculed, they resolve to believe that nothing of experimental religion can be justified to strict reason, or have any thing to do with argument.

But how impious, and how unreasonable a fancy this is, will sufficiently appear, if it can be proved that every true christian has a most rational and incontestable evidence of the truth of his religion, drawn from the change that is hereby made in his own heart. If it can once be made evident, that eternal life is begun in every soul that believes in Jesus Christ, this will confirm christianity with a high hand, and confute the wicked scandal for ever.

I have begun this attempt in the first discourse, and have shewn that eternal life is composed of two parts, *viz.* holiness and happiness.

The happiness of it consists in a just and comfortable sense of the forgiveness of sin, and a lively hope and persuasion of the special love of God, and the delightful harmony of all the natural powers, *viz.* reason, conscience, the will, and the passions. Where these are found, heaven is begun; eternal life has taken possession of the soul; and this evidently proves the doctrine that effected it to be divine.

Now, if an atheist, a heathen, or a Jew, should cavil and say, "Are not all your hopes mere presumption? Are not your sense and persuasion of the love of God mere delusions of fancy, and raptures of warm imagination, without any ground, or solid foundation of reason?" The christian may boldly refute such suspicions. These are no vain transports, no foolish visions of hope and joy, because as high and glorious as my comforts and my expectations are, they are built on a due apprehension of the justice of God, as well as his mercy; I have no hopes of pardon by Jesus Christ, but what are supported by the righteousness and truth of God, as well as his goodness; for in this way of salvation, offended justice is satisfied to the full, and mercy can exert itself in full glory, without the least dishonour or reflection on the strict righteousness of God. God is just in the justification of a sinner this way. *He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness;* 1 John i. 9.

Besides, says the christian, the change wrought in me is real, and not imaginary; I am quite another creature than once I was; the several powers of my nature, that were wont to be in perpetual war, now enjoy a peaceful harmony, and my soul feels the pleasure, and the divine peace. My strictest and severest reason approves the change, and owns it to be divine.

And thus I am led onward to speak of the other part of eternal life, and that is holiness. This also is found in believing souls, and becomes an evidence of the truth of the gospel.

Holiness may be described by these five necessary ingredients of it.

1. An aversion to, and hatred of all sin.
2. A contempt of the present world, in comparison of the future.
3. A delight in the worship and society of God.
4. Zeal and activity in his service.
5. A hearty love to fellow-creatures, and more especially to fellow saints.

I shall discourse of each of these particularly, and shew that eternal life consists in them, and this eternal life is found in believers.

Holiness consists in an aversion to, and hatred of all sin. This is complete in heaven, and without this, heaven cannot be complete. Into heaven *there entereth nothing that defileth*, Rev. 21. 27. Every inhabitant there is completely averse to all iniquity, and hates every thing that displeases God; for nothing but perfect obedience is found there; the spirits of the just are there made perfect, *Heb.* xii. 23. Now this in a measure and degree is found in believers here, for *he that abideth in Christ sinneth not*, 1 John iii. 6. He cannot sin with a full purpose of heart; *he that is born of God cannot sin with constancy* and greediness, as others do that are only born of flesh and blood; he cannot sin without an inward sincere reluctancy, without the combat of the spirit against the flesh; he doth not make a trade of sin, sinning is not his business, his delight, and pleasure. This is a blessed testimony of the truth of the gospel, that faith in the Son of God purifies the heart, *Acts* xv. 9.

Every christian has an aversion to all sin: If he chooses some sins, to continue in them, and hates other iniquities, he can never be said to be a true believer in Christ, and to have the work of faith in sincerity wrought in his heart.

Other religions have professed an aversion to some sins, but indulged others. Some make cruelty a part of their duty, and require the sacrificing of mankind to appease the anger of their gods; a bloody and impious practice, as well as a vain and fruitless one! Some forbid murder, but allow and encourage variety of uncleanness, and make that a part of their worship. Other professions have forbid wanton practices, and commended chastity; but they indulge resentment and revenge, as a necessary part of the character of a warrior, or a great man. Carnal and sensual lusts have been opposed and hated by some of the old philosophers, but spiritual iniquities have hereby been promoted. Pride has hereby been wonderfully increased, and none of them can excuse themselves from those sins which make men very like Satan, although they are freed from the brutality of sensual lusts. But the business of the gospel of Christ is to keep men from committing any kind of sins whatsoever.

Other religions have changed one lust for another; but the religion of Christ forbids all manner of iniquity, and changes the whole nature into holiness. Christianity

refines the soul in all the powers of it, and inclines us to the duties both of the first and second table; it writes the law of God in the heart, and brings the soul to a sweet compliance therewith. All the affections are renewed; all old things are done away and all things are become new; he that is in Christ is a new creature; he has crucificd the flesh, with its affections and lusts; 2 *Cor.* v. 17. *Gal.* v. 24.

Surely there is a spirit and power that accompanies the religion of our Lord Jesus, such as other religions know not; and this was manifest abundantly in the primitive christians, when those wretches were converted, whose names were once written in that black catalogue that the apostle speaks of, 1 *Cor.* vi. 9. when they, by the light of the gospel, were purified, were purged from their defilements, and were made new creatures. The apostle could appeal to the Corinthian church, and say, so vile and filthy were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God, 1 *Cor.* vi. 11. Not in the names of other gods, and other religions, but in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Philosophy was raised to a great height in the city of Corinth; it was almost enough for a man to be accounted learned, to have been in that city, and to have known a little of the customs of it; yet all their learning was not sufficient to reform them, for they were a profligate and lewd people still. But the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ breaking in upon their souls, purified, refined them, and made such an alteration in them, that the world beheld, and were amazed at the surprizing change. They thought it strange that the christians would not run with them to the same excess of riot, 1 *Pet.* iv. 4. They were astonished to see a drunkard at once turn sober and temperate; a lewd unclean wretch, by hearing the gospel, become a professor and an example of chastity; a cruel and passionate temper made calm, and kind, and forgiving; a swine forsake the mire, and put on the nature of a cleanly animal; a dog or a lion changed into a lamb. This wrought conviction with power: This was miracle and demonstration; this witnessed the truth and divinity of the gospel of Christ beyond all contradiction or doubt.

II. A contempt of this world, is another part of holiness, and of heaven; a sacred disregard of temporal things raised by the sight of things eternal.

If we look upwards to heaven, we shall behold there all the inhabitants looking down with a sacred contempt upon the trifles, amusements, businesses, and cares of this present life, that engross our affections, awaken our desires, fill our hearts with pleasure or pain, and our flesh with constant labour. With what holy scorn do you think those souls, who are dismissed from flesh, look down upon the hurries and bustles of this present state, in which we are engaged? They dwell in the full sight of those glories which they hoped for here on earth, and their intimate acquaintance with the pleasures of that upper world, and the divine sensations that are raised in them there, make them contemn all the pleasures of this state, and every thing below heaven. This is a part of eternal life, this belongs in some degree to every believer; for he is not a believer that is not got above this world in a good measure; he is not a christian, who is not weaned, in some degree, from this world: For this is our victory, whereby we overcome the world, even our faith. He that is born of God, overcomes the world; he that believes in Jesus, is born of God, 1 *John* v. 1, 4. Whence the argument is plain, he that believes in Jesus, the Son of God, overcomes this present world. And where christianity is raised to a good degree of life

and power in the soul, there we see the christian got near to heaven: he is, as it were, a fellow for angels, a fit companion for the spirits of the just made perfect. The affairs of this life are beneath his best desires and his hopes: he engages his hand in them so far, as God his Father appoints his duty; but he longs for the upper world, where his hopes are gone before: "When shall I be entirely dismissed from this labour and toil? The gaudy pleasures this world entertains me with, are no entertainments to me; I am weaned from them, I am born from above." This is the language of that faith that overcomes the world: And faith, where it is wrought in truth in the soul, hath, in some measure, this effect; and where it shines in its brightness, it hath, in a great degree, this sublime grace accompanying it; or rather, (shall I say?) this piece of heavenly glory.

Pain and sickness, poverty and reproach, sorrow and death itself, have been contemned by those that have believed in Christ Jesus, with much more honour to christianity, than ever was brought to other religions by the same profession, and the same practice.

Other religions have, in some degree, promised a contempt of the world, a contempt of sickness, and pain, and death; but then it hath been only here and there a person of a hardier mould of body; here and there one in an age, or one in a nation, who by a firmness of natural spirits, an obstinate resolution, attained by much labour of meditation, and toil of thought, hath got above the world, and above death. But our religion boasts of its hundreds and thousands, and that not only those who had firmer natural spirits, or have been skilled in thought and meditation, and absent from sensual things by philosophy, and intellectual exercises; but the feeblest of mankind, the weak things of this world, the foolish and the young, the infant (as it were) in years, and the feeble sex, have been made to contemn this world, and the pleasures of it, the hopes, and the sorrows, pain, and death. They have learnt to live above all the enticing joys and affrighting terrors of this present state, that is, to live near to heaven: So that whatsoever religion pretends to a competition with ours, it falls vastly short in this respect, in raising the affections above the world, above the joys and fears of the present life.

Again, if we consider what motives have argued the minds of men to the contempt of the world, we shall find the religion of Christ Jesus is far superior to all in this respect.

Other religions have taught men to despise the good things of this world, and to be unconcerned about the evils of it, in a mere romantic way: Such was the Stoical doctrine, denying health and wealth, sleep and safety, to have any goodness in them; and professing that pain, poverty, sickness, want, hunger, and shame, were no evils; and upon this account they taught their disciples to be unsolicitous about the one or the other, because they were neither good nor evil. Thus, while they change the use of words, they would make stocks and stones of us, rather than intelligent and holy despisers of sensible things; but the christian doctrine teaches us to contemn both the good and evil things of sense and time, by the expectation and prospect of the invisible and eternal world, where both the good and evil things are of infinitely greater importance: So our Saviour preaches, Matt. vi. 19, 20. *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth*

nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. Pluck out a right eye, cut off a right hand, on earth, lest, sparing these, thy whole body be cast into hell, where the gnawing worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched; *Matt.* v. 29, 30. *Mark* ix. 43, &c. And the afflictions, as well as the comforts of life, are contemned and surmounted by the spirit of a christian, upon the same noble principles, *Rom.* viii. 18. He reckons that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us; and therefore he endures the cross, and despises the shame, following the divine example of Christ.

Other doctrines have endeavoured to raise the minds of men above the solicitudes or cares of this life upon mean and base principles, unworthy of human nature, denying the immortality of the soul, and the life to come. Thus the Epicureans would raise the professors of their religion above the fears of death, by assuring them, that after death there was nothing; that the soul and body died together, were blended in the dust, and were for ever lost in one grave: but, on the other hand, the religion of Christ gives us a view of things beyond the grave, insures a resurrection to us, brings life and immortality to light by the gospel, by Christ Jesus, who together with the Father, is originally possessed of eternal life, and thus leads us on to a glorious contempt of this present world of vanity: *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory: While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen, are temporal; but the things which are not seen, are eternal. For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;* 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. and v. 1.

Other professions taught their followers not so much to contemn riches and pleasures, as to exchange them for fame and glory, and public applause; and this they looked upon as their chief good. Most of the philosophers may be charged with this just accusation; and Cicero, that great philosopher, in a notorious degree; but the christian both labours and suffers reproach, because he trusts in the living God, and has the promise of the life to come; 1 *Tim.* iv. 8, 10. he goes through the trial of cruel mockings, as well as scourgings and torture, that he may obtain a better resurrection; *Heb.* xi. 35, 36. He neglects his ease and his honours together, and despises fame as well as pleasure and riches, and all mortal desirables, when they stand in competition with his immortal hopes.

Others have despised the grandeur and pomp of life, and thrown their money into the sea; but instead of exalting themselves above men, they have neglected all the necessary duties and decencies of life; they have lived, as it were, in common with their fellow-animals of the earth, and degraded themselves to the rank and level of brute beasts; such were the Cynic philosophers: But the christian is diligent and active in all services to God and man, and fulfils the duties of his present state with honour, while he lives upon the hopes of futures and invisibles.

Thus if we consider either the degree of this part of holiness, *viz.* the contempt of the world, if we consider the reasons upon which it is founded, or how far this contempt of the world has prevailed among the generality of christians; we shall find the gospel hath infinitely the advantage of all other doctrines, of all other religions.

To see a man raised above this world, and yet exercised in all the duties of life; to see him live with a holy superiority to all things below heaven, and yet fulfilling

all his relative duties among men with diligence; to see a man ready every moment to be gone from this world, and yet content to stay here as long as his Heavenly Father pleases, under the troubles, and burdens, and agonies of this life too; this shews the religion to be divine, and from heaven: *He that believes, has this witness in himself;* and where faith rises high, this witness appears evident and glorious.

III. Another part of the holiness of eternal life, consists in a delight in the worship and enjoyment of God. This is perfect in heaven, this is eternal life: *Rev.* vii. 15. They are before the throne of God night and day, that is, perpetually, and serve him there in his temple. Now the christian religion attains this end in a good measure; it brings the soul to delight in divine worship and converse with God, which no mere human religion could ever do: For since no human religion could ever teach an awakened sinner, how he might appear in the presence of a holy God, with assurance and comfort, no other religion could make a soul delight in the worship of God. We can never delight in drawing near to God, that hath infinite vengeance in him, while we know not but he will pour that vengeance out upon us; we fly far from him, unless we have some good ground of hope, that he will forgive us our iniquities, and receive us into his favour. Now since there is no other doctrine, that shews us how our sins may be forgiven, or how the favour of God may be attained; there is no other religion can allure or draw us into the presence of God with pleasure: *Heb.* x. 19, 20. Let us draw near and worship the Father, in full assurance and confidence, that he will accept our persons and our worship, since we have such an high-priest to introduce us with acceptance; since by his flesh and incarnation, he has made a way for us to come into the presence of God with satisfaction and pleasure, therefore let us draw near and worship him. The influence of this argument has been found by christians, by every christian; for there is not one that hath believed in Christ, but has had this witness in himself. There is a sweet serenity and calmness of spirit belongs to the souls of those in whom faith is lively and strong, even when they stand before God, though he be a God of terror and vengeance to sinners: for they know Jesus is their atonement, their introducer, their peace; and therefore they love to draw near to him as a God reconciled, they rejoice in him as their highest happiness.

Other professions of men, when they abandoned sensual pleasures, and the vanities of this world, yet taught them that their happiness must flow from themselves, and made their own virtues their heaven, without any regard to God. These philosophers were self-sufficient, full of themselves, and they were so far from making their rivers of pleasure to flow from the right-hand of God, that they even denied their dependance upon him in this respect; and they supposed their wise men to be equal with God, deriving all their blessedness from within themselves. But christianity leads the soul out of itself to God, as it gives a clearer and larger knowledge of God himself, in his felicitating perfections, than the heathens could ever attain; it assures us, that being near to God is our heaven, and the sight of him is our happiness, as well as provides a new and living way of access to him, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ: therefore the believer rejoices in all opportunities of drawing near to God, for it is the beginning of his heaven, and his delight in it is an inward and powerful witness to the truth of his religion.

IV. Zeal and activity for the service of God, is another part of heaven, another part

of eternal life, and the holiness of it. We have abundant reason to believe that heaven is not a state of mere enjoyment, unactive and idle; but a state of service and activity for that God whose we are, and from whom we have received infinite favours. The angels in heaven are swift messengers to perform the will of their God, *Psal.* ciii. 20, 21. The spirits of just men made perfect are like angels. They do the will of God as a pattern for us on earth; for we are taught to pray, that his will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. What particular services they are employed in of God, we know not; but that they are for ever zealous in those services which God employs them in, we doubt not, we cannot disbelieve. And this active zeal in the service of God, and pursuit of his glory, is the very temper and practice of the true christian; and that not only in some more important enterprizes, but in the common actions of life: Whether he eat or drink, or whatsoever he does, he makes it his rule of life, to do all to the glory of God; 1 *Cor.* x. 31.

Now this sublime zeal, this noble activity for the service of God and his glory, was not found among the professors of other religions. To glorify God, was not their aim and end; those that rose highest among the old philosophers had not set their aim and end right: They that knew God, glorified him not as God, *Rom.* i. 21. They did not make the glory of God the great design of their actions: It was not zeal for God that animated them to pursue virtue, but merely their own ends, their own satisfaction or ease, or the vanity of their own minds, pride and attempt of superiority above other men; or at best, their motives of action were the reasonableness of virtue, and the benefit of it to themselves and their fellow-citizens. But the glory of God is the aim of christians, and the end of every true believer: he has some degree of zeal for the honour of God, and therefore is active in those duties which God proposes to him.

When we see a person regardless of all his self-interests in the world, and at the same time pursuing the honour of an invisible God, following hard after the glory of that God, that his fleshly eyes have not seen; we may say he has something above what mere corrupt nature leads him to, or impresses upon him. The believer has this witness in himself, zeal and activity for the glory of God in the world.

V. The last thing that goes to make up holiness, is a hearty love to all men, and especially to the saints. This is a noble ingredient of eternal life; this is a divine and heavenly temper; this is a beautiful part of the image of God communicated to the soul of man. That God who is the original and foundation of eternal life, is a glorious pattern of this love; he makes his sun to rise, and his rain to fall on the just and on the unjust, and leaves not himself without witness of his divinity, by filling the hearts of men with food and gladness: See *Matt.* v. 45. *Acts* xiv. 17. He shews his love to enemies and rebels, in forgiving millions of offences, and pardoning crimes of the largest size and deepest aggravations, and he loves his saints with peculiar tenderness. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who also is the true God and eternal life, came down from heaven to exemplify his divine love. It was his love to mankind that persuaded him to put on flesh and blood, and prevailed with him to suffer pains, agonies, and death, that his enemies might obtain salvation and life. O glorious example of love! Now this is in some measure wrought into the make of every true christian, and imitated in the practice of every true believer: He is obliged, by one of the chief rules of his religion to love his neighbour as himself; that is, to do that to others, which he

thinks just and reasonable that they should do to him; *Matt.* xxii. 39. *Luke* vi. 31. He is bound to forgive freely those that offend him, as he hopes for forgiveness of his offences against God; *Matt.* vi. 14, 15. He rejoices in the welfare of his fellow-creatures, without repining: He loves his enemies, does good to them that hate him, blesses those that curse him, and prays for his persecutors and spiteful foes; *Luke* vi. 27. He pities all that are miserable, but takes a peculiar delight in his fellow christians; (the christians must be known by this, that they love one another.) *He does good to all but especially to the household of faith;* Gal. vi. 10.

Other religions know nothing of so generous and diffusive a love; the men of heathenism were *hateful, and hating one another, and spent their lives in malice and envy;* Tit. iii. 3. They did not so much as aspire to so divine a virtue as the love of enemies; this is the noble singularity of our gospel. The heathen professions encouraged revenge, and made it one ingredient of a hero: But envy and malice, wrath and revenge, must be banished from the heart and practice of a christian, to whom the kindness and love of God our Saviour has appeared; these vices must stand aloof from the saint, and thus bear a testimony to the truth and divinity of the doctrine of Christ.

I grant that every one of these instances, and all these parts of eternal life which I have now described, are not to be found equally in all believers; nor are they in every believer in a very eminent and evident degree. But if we take all of them together, pardon of sin, peace of conscience, the favour of God, and a sense of his love, a pleasurable harmony of all our powers, an aversion to all sin, and hatred of every iniquity, a holy contempt of this world, in the pleasures, as well as in the pains and sorrows of it; delight in the worship of God, and desire after his enjoyment; zeal and activity in service for God, with a sincere aim for his glory, and a hearty love to fellow-creatures and fellow-christians: I say, if we join all these together, we shall find that the christian religion has a witness far superior to all other doctrines that ever pretended to divinity. We shall find that every believer has something of all these qualities wrought in his heart, and it is exemplified in his life. Truly, where none of these are found, that person cannot profess himself a christian with any just ground of hope: Where there is not such a witness as this to the truth of christianity, where there is not this eternal life begun in some sensible measure and manner, that person's profession of christianity is but vain; and his practice and his course contradict the words of his lips, when he pronounces himself a believer in the Son of God.

I might here take notice, that the three that bear witness on earth to the truth of the gospel, *viz.* the spirit, the water, and the blood, may be expounded agreeably to the foregoing discourse. The blood may signify the pacification of a guilty conscience by the atoning blood of Christ. The water, may intend the sanctification and purifying of our natures from sinful appetites and practices, as by the washing of water: And the spirit may imply that efficacious influence which a believer receives from the holy Spirit, both toward the pacification of his conscience, and the purification of his soul. All these witness to the truth of christianity; though others are of opinion, that the Spirit in his miraculous operations, the water, or purity of the nature and life of Christ, and the blood, or his violent death, and the attendants on it, are the three witnesses on earth which the apostle designs; nor can I absolutely determine which is the right.

Before I conclude, I would lay down one caution and one reflection.

The caution is this: That though I exclude all human religions from the honour, power, and glorious effects of christianity, as being utterly incapable of them, yet the Jewish religion, and that of the ancient patriarchs, which were divine, are not hereby totally excluded from this honour, and these characters, but only in part: For there were many souls in whom these beginnings of eternal life were wrought under those dispensations; but not with that glory and evidence as under the christian. And indeed Judaism was but a sort of infant christianity, a veiled gospel. The christian religion is Judaism fulfilled, or the gospel standing in open light. All that holiness and happiness which was found among the Jews or patriarchs, is entirely owing to Christ and his gospel, to the sacrifice, and the spirit, and grace of Jesus, which were typified by the legal atonements, and blood, sprinklings and washings; and which wrought powerfully this divine life in their souls, through all those types, but with feebler conviction, and in a fainter light.

Besides, it should be observed here also, that since the christian religion has received its full authority and divine establishment, the Jewish dispensation ceases, and is no longer owned, or aided by the Spirit of God, to produce these wonderful effects. The types and shadows of that state have now no power to speak peace and pardon to the guilty soul, or to purify our sinful natures, and begin eternal life in them. These are abolished by divine appointment, and God will bear witness to them no more. They who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, are deceivers; 2 *John* 7. *He that hath not the Son of God, hath not life;* 1 John v. 12. So that the doctrine of Christ is the only religion which we know of, that is practised in the world, that has had the stamp of divine authority above sixteen hundred years; and as there have been multitudes of witnesses to the truth of it, multitudes of souls in the first, and all the succeeding ages, who have felt eternal life wrought in them by the power of the gospel, so there is no other religion ever since can produce and shew such divine testimony; for there *is salvation in no other name;* Acts iv. 12.

The only reflection I shall make, is this: We may derive hence a solid and infallible rule for self-examination, whether we are christians or no. Have we in ourselves this divine witness of our christianity? Have we eternal life wrought in our own hearts? Have we derived peace of conscience and any hope of pardoning grace by trusting in the Son of God? Have we found any satisfaction of soul in drawing near to God by Jesus the Mediator? Do we find a sincere love to God kindled in our souls by the hope of his special favour? Is there any thing of the holiness or happiness of the heavenly state begun within us? Have we an aversion to all sin in some degree answerable to what the saints and angels have in heaven? Have we a holy contempt of this world? Have we overcome the world as those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and have put their trust in him? Do we live above it, as those that are within sight of eternal blessedness? Are we come to mount Sion, the city of the living God, to the innumerable company of angels, and the church of the first-born, &c. in this respect? Do we look down upon the tempting vanities of this life with a sacred disdain, something like those that dwell on high in the full possession of life eternal? Is there any similitude between our life and theirs, between our hearts and theirs? Do we delight in the worship of God? Is his presence our joy? Is his enjoyment the object of

our desires? Are we zealous for his service? Are our aims set for his glory? Are we active in the discharge of the duties that he hath appointed to us, and the several provinces of service that he has ordained us to be engaged in, in this world? Do we do the will of our Heavenly Father on earth, in some measure as it is done in heaven? How stand our hearts affected toward our fellow-creatures? Do we love our neighbour, by dealing with him as we desire he should deal with us? Can we forgive enemies? Do we rejoice in the welfare of others without envy, and take delight in the holiness and peace of our fellow-creatures, and give the poor and mean followers of Christ, a large share in our hearts and kindest affections? If this be the character and temper of our spirits, and this the conduct of our lives, then eternal life is begun in us; then we may say to our own souls, This is the record that God hath given concerning his Son, that there is eternal life in him; 1 *John* v. 11. and we are sure we build our hopes on a solid foundation, for this life is already begun in our hearts, and the Spirit of God, who has begun this work, will carry it on, and make it perfect in the days of eternity. *Amen.*

SERMON III.

THE INWARD WITNESS TO CHRISTIANITY.

1 JOHN v. 10.

HE THAT BELIEVETH ON THE SON OF GOD, HATH THE WITNESS IN HIMSELF.

THE THIRD PART.

MANY and glorious are the outward testimonies that God has given to our religion; both in the days when his Son Jesus dwelt on earth, and in the time of the ministration of the apostles who followed their blessed Lord. The miracles wrought, the prophecies fulfilled, and the various glories attending the ministration of the gospel, conspire to confirm our faith; each of them are evidences of the truth and divinity of this doctrine; and all of them joined together, bear such a testimony as cannot be resisted. We live now in these latter days at a long distance from those seasons wherein these miracles were wrought, and wherein God appeared in so immediate a manner from heaven, to witness to the truth of the gospel of his Son; but God has taken care to furnish every true believer with a sufficient witness of christianity; we are not left void of evidence at this day. He that believeth, hath the witness in himself. There is an internal testimony given to the gospel of Christ in the heart of every one that receives it in truth. There are the beginnings of that eternal life wrought in the soul, which the Son of God bestows on all believers; he that hath the Son hath life. The spiritual life of a christian runs into eternity; it is the same divine temper, the same peaceful and holy qualities of mind communicated to the believer here in the days of grace, which shall be fulfilled and perfected in the world of glory; and this is a blessed witness to the truth of christianity; it proves with abundant evidence, that it is a religion sufficient to save souls, for the salvation is begun in every man that receives it.

I shall repeat no more of the foregoing discourses, but proceed immediately to answer the last question there proposed, *viz.* What sort of witness this is, which true faith gives to the gospel of Christ, and what are the remarkable properties of this testimony?

I answer, I. It is a witness that dwells more in the heart than in the head. It is a testimony known by being felt and practised, and not by mere reasoning; the greatest reasoners may miss of it, for it is a testimony written in the heart; and upon this account it has some prerogatives above all the external arguments for the truth of christianity. This inward argument is always at hand, when a believer is in the exercise of his graces, and acting according to his new nature and life: It is an argument that is not lost through the weakness of the brain, the defect of the memory, and long absence from books and study, to which other arguments are liable; it is an argument that cannot be forgotten, while true religion remains in the heart, for it is graven there in lasting characters.

Those words of St. Paul to the Corinthians, in his second epistle, chap. iii. ver. 2, 3. have a reference to our present case: *Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart.* We have a glory in our religion, that distinguishes it from, and advances it above the Jewish dispensation; their law was written in tables of stone, and afterwards Moses wrote it out at large in a book: But ye have something (says the apostle) written in your hearts, that proves the truth of your religion, and of my divine commission, ye who are converted by my gospel; ye Corinthians, who were once vile as the vilest, and upon whose souls the devil, by his temptations and by his power, had inscribed many dark characters, and seemed to seal you over, and mark you to damnation, ye are now the epistle of Christ, ye have those dismal characters rased out, and ye have golden and bright ones inscribed. The image of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is eternal life, appears fairly written on your souls: Ye are the epistle of Christ, and eternal life is begun in you, and thus the gospel witnesses its own truth and divinity by an internal evidence.

The gospel of Christ is like a seal or signet, of such inimitable and divine graving, that no created power can counterfeit it; and when the Spirit of God has stamped this gospel on the soul, there are so many holy and happy lines drawn or impressed thereby; so many sacred signatures and divine features stamped on the mind, that give certain evidence both of a heavenly signet, and a heavenly operator.

A christian, who has well studied the doctrines and proofs of christianity, can give sufficient reasons for the truth of them, and for his believing them. He finds what is sufficiently satisfactory, to confirm his belief in the outward testimonies, in the miracles wrought in the world, and the prophecies fulfilled: "I have (says he) in my understanding, many arguments and evidences of the truth of the gospel, and my reason is convinced that it is a divine religion. But there is a miracle wrought in my heart, that is of more efficacy than this, and is to me a more convincing proof of the gospel of Christ; eternal life is begun in me. I find my conscience, that was disturbed with the guilt of sin, established in peace, upon solid hopes of pardon. I have an interest in the love of God, and lively sensations of that love; I have a hatred of all sin, I live above the world, and have a holy contempt of the trifles, businesses, and cares of this life; I delight in the company of him that dwells in heaven; I find in my soul that I love him, and love those who are like him; I walk, as seeing him, who is invisible; I have a zeal for his glory, and with active diligence I am employed for the honour of his name in the world. These things I find wrought in me by the gospel of Christ: The discoveries of the nature and works of God, by his gospel, have filled my soul with holy wonder, and bowed my spirit down to adore him. The revelations of his amazing condescension and love, have raised and fired my heart to love him; the examples of superlative piety I meet with in this gospel, have excited my holy imitation; and the motives proposed here, are so awful and so alluring, that all my powers of hope and fear are joined and engaged to constrain my obedience to the excellent and divine precepts of this religion. I feel that I am quite altered from what once I was, I am a new creature, and the change is divine and heavenly. There is something within me, that bears witness, that my religion is from God."

II. It is a witness that will, in some measure, appear in the life, wheresoever it is written in the heart: for eternal life is an active principle, it will be discovering and ex-

ercising itself. Is it possible, that a man should have the pardon of his sins, and sweet peace of conscience, a sense of the love of God, who is an infinite good, a joyful satisfaction in his heavenly favour, and manifest nothing of this in his aspect and behaviour? That he should shew no serenity of countenance, no sweetness of temper, no inward joy? Is it possible that he should have an utter aversion to sin, a hatred of all iniquity in his heart, and not make it appear in his life? That he should maintain a holy contempt of this world, and scorn of it, in comparison of the future glories that his eye is fixed upon, so warm a zeal for God, and so hearty a love to men, and not manifest it to the world? Surely his life will be above, where his heart is; and his heart will be in heaven, where his treasures are. *Our conversation is in heaven, says the blessed Paul, under the influence of this religion and these hopes;* Phil. iii. 20, 21.

It is true indeed, this is a testimony that cannot be communicated to others, in the same measure and manner that it is felt by the persons that believe. In this respect it is like the hidden manna, which none knows but they that taste of it; yet those that feed upon it daily, will discover it in some outward appearances; as you read of Jonathan, in the day when he was faint in pursuing his enemies, he tasted of the honey, and his eyes were enlightened; 1 *Sam.* xiv. 27. Just so will it be with the soul that hath tasted of the gospel of Christ, this food of eternal life; he will discover it in his language, in his behaviour; and it is a shame to those that profess to be believers, that in all things they look so much like the men of this world, and do not discover it in their lives, and witness what they have in their hearts, even the beginning of eternal life: if we are the epistle of Christ, we shall be, in some measure, known and read of all men; 2 *Cor.* iii. 2, 3. Christianity in the soul, eternal life begun in the heart, will be like the sweet ointment of the right-hand, that bewrays itself, and cannot be hid; *Prov.* xxvii. 16. Ye christians, ye are the light of the earth, ye believers are the salt of the world; ye must not appear like others, if you would be like yourselves; the honour of God your Saviour demands some sensible and important difference. Ye must not be too much like the world, if ye mean to give glory or evidence to the religion of Christ; *John* xv. 19. *Rom.* xii. 2.

III. Though this inward evidence of the truth of christianity be of a spiritual nature, and spring from pious experience, yet it is a very rational evidence also, and may be made out and justified to the strictest reason. It is no vain, fanciful, and enthusiastic business; for while every believer feels the argument working strong in his heart and soul, he finds also the convincing force of it upon his understanding: While he feels his inward powers sweetly inclined to virtue and holiness, which by nature had strong inclination to sensuality and sin, and knows that this was wrought in him purely by the gospel of Christ; he cannot but infer, that must be a divine principle which has such divine effects. He knows that he was once blind and dead in trespasses and sins, but now he is awake, and alive to God and to righteousness; he is born again, he dwells, as it were, in a new world, there is a mighty and surprizing change past upon him, even from death to life; and thence he concludes, by the justest rules of reasoning, that it must be a doctrine of divine wisdom and power, that gave him this blessed resurrection: it is above and beyond nature, it is a miracle of grace, and none but God could work it.

And this is what I call the inward witness of the Spirit of God to the truth of the gospel, at least in these latter ages of christianity. The outward and more visible testimony of the Spirit consists in those sensible miracles that were wrought, and those

wondrous gifts of healing, of tongues, &c. that were bestowed on the first christians; *Heb.* ii. 4. *Rom.* xv. 19. But the spirit's inward testimony is the constant miracle of regeneration and converting grace. This witness, in my opinion, has been dishonoured by too many protestants, when they have explained it merely by inward impulses, and vehement impressions upon the mind, without the conduct of reason. This has tempted the prophane world to call our devout efforts of christian piety mere enthusiasm and wild imagination, the flashes of a kindled blood and vapours, that are puffed about with every wind: but when the testimony of the spirit is explained in the manner I have described, it must approve itself to all the sober and reasonable part of mankind.

Here let us stand still and consider, how great and divine a power was necessary to make this mighty change on the heart of a poor, ignorant, guilty, sinful creature, and establish him a saint in peace and purity. It is not every one that hears this same gospel, that obtains the same salvation, and that feels the same glorious change; and many a true christian must confess, how long they sat under the same ministry and instructions before their hearts were brought to love God, or renewed to an heavenly life: thus their experience teaches them, there was an almighty virtue and efficacy at last attended this gospel, which made it more powerful in one day, or week, or month, than it had been in whole years before. There was a quickening spirit, that accompanied the voice of the word, and gave them life, while the word called them to arise from the dead. And this is yet more gloriously evident, when such changes have been wrought on sinners in an hour or two: they went to hear the gospel, poor, lame, blind, senseless and thoughtless of God and eternity; and they were awakened, convinced of sin and of righteousness; they learnt their ruin and their recovery at once, through the atonement and grace of Christ: the poor came home enriched with various graces: the blind see wonders, and the lame return leaping and rejoicing in the hope of glory. This gives plain proof of a divine doctrine, and a divine attending spirit and power.

It is the blessed Spirit of God, who dictated these divine truths of the gospel, that accompanies them with his own power to the minds and consciences of those who hear the gospel preached, and by his own power works this glorious change in the hearts and lives of sinners: it is through the sanctification of the spirit, and the belief of the truth, that sinners are called by the gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ; 2 *Thess.* ii. 13, 14. It is by the preaching of this gospel, attended with this spirit, that the fornicators and adulterers become chaste, the thieves and extortioners are made honest and just, the covetous earth-worms become heavenly-minded, the drunkards are turned sober, and these heirs of hell are made fit to inherit the kingdom of God. The unclean are washed, the unholy are sanctified, and the guilty justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God: 1 *Cor.* vi. 9, 10, 11. It is the blessed Spirit the Comforter, that speaks peace to the conscience of believers, through the atoning blood of Christ; it is he sheds abroad the love of God in their hearts, by believing the gospel; *Rom.* v. 5. and it is he that fills them with love to God and to their neighbour; for this love is the fruit of the Spirit; *Gal.* v. 22. and when the Spirit of God shines upon his own work in the soul of man, and makes this glorious change appear to the self-examining christian, it is a noble testimony that it gives to the truth and divinity of the gospel of Christ.

IV. This witness to the truth of christianity is certain and infallible, in the nature and reason of things; and where this divine life arises to a considerable height, it gives a full

assurance to the christian, that his religion is true. Eternal life begun in the soul, according to the description of it, cannot rise from a *false* doctrine; it must proceed from the God of truth, who himself is *eternal life;* 1 *John* v. 20. and the original and spring of it to all his happy creatures. If it were possible that any other doctrine or religion could work such an inward witness in the hearts of sinners; if it were possible that any mere human gospel could give such a life and happiness as I have described, God would never have appointed his own divine gospel such a doubtful witness. But I may say, God will never suffer so divine a testimony to belong to any religion, but that which himself hath revealed; and in our day it can belong to none but the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. If false religions could have this witness, could work this eternal life in sinners, we could hardly ever have sufficient rules to judge of the true religion by. Rejoice then ye that have found this witness in your souls, that have eternal life begun in you; seek after no other way to heaven. Be not drawn aside from the truth, but be stedfast. Ye cannot find such another doctrine among men; ye cannot find another religion that can offer such testimonies as this. It is then a convincing, an infallible witness; such a new and heavenly life wrought in the heart, is a sure proof that the doctrine comes from God.

V. It is a strong and powerful witness, and ever ready at hand to baffle the most learned sophisms, and the boldest temptations. It lies so near, and is always at hand, that it is a present shield against every flying arrow from the camp of infidelity. It is an argument drawn from sense and vital experience, and it effectually answers all the subtle cavils of false reasoning. Suppose a crafty philosopher should pretend to prove, that bread is not wholesome, that water is useless to allay thirst, or wine is mere poison; I may boldly maintain the wholesomeness, and the happy use of bread, water, and wine; for I am daily nourished by this bread, my thirst has been perpetually quenched by water, and I have often found and felt this wine refresh me. The quibbles of logic, against the sense and experience of a true christian, are but as darts of straw and stubble against the scales of a leviathan.

When *the Greeks, who seek after learning*, say to a christian, "How can this gospel be true and divine, which is so plain and simple in itself, which was preached by a parcel of fishermen, and invented by a carpenter, and his followers that published it had no more learning than he? How is it possible such a religion should be from God, that hath so much of unlearned simplicity in it?" But the christian can tell them, that all the wisdom and learning of the philosophers could never do such miracles as this gospel has done, could never work such a divine life and temper in my heart.

When the Jews shall say, "How can this be the Messiah? For the Messiah, the Son of God, must be a great King, the Governor of the earth, must deliver the Jews from their slavery, must have power over all the nations; how could this be the Messiah, that was crucified among his countrymen, and we, with our fellow-citizens, joined together to put him to death, and he lay like a mere mortal in his grave? How can this be the Saviour, or can his religion be true?" The christian, that is called of God, and has found the witness in himself, makes answer, *he that was foolishness to the Greeks, and a scandal to the Jews, is the wisdom of God, and the power of God to me.* I have seen my *sins nailed to the cross* of this Redeemer; I have found a way for the pardon of all my iniquities, and the satisfaction of my conscience (which was before full of anguish)

in and from the cross of this Messiah; I have found holiness wrought in my soul by the belief of this gospel; I have felt such virtue proceeding from this Saviour, that I, who was before all over unclean, and defiled, am, in some degree, made holy: this gospel therefore must be from God, and this is the Messiah his Son.

When the deists of our age shall object and say, "How can ye believe such a religion to be divine, that is delivered in so poor and mean a way, as the story of Christ, and all the strange doctrines of your gospel? How can the Bible be the word of God? Not only because there are so many obscurities and mystical speeches in it, that a learned man in our day would be ashamed to write it? How can this gospel be the revelation of God, that wants so much of the beauty of oratory and strong reasoning, which the wisdom of man pretends to, and daily performs?" But the christian answers; "The gospel, that is contained here, must be from God: for although it has so much human weakness in our eyes, I have felt a divine power attending it, it hath been to me the power of God unto salvation. Let it want therefore what human ornaments it will, if it has a divine efficacy in it, I am sure it is from above." Thus whatsoever temptations are proposed to baffle his faith, and to stagger his belief of the doctrine of Christ, this one instance of its divinity, keeps the believer steady: "I have found it of efficacy to begin eternal life in me, therefore I know it is from God."

But as to this sort of objections, against the truth and divinity of our religion, arising from the doubtful or difficult evidence of the books of scripture, we may fetch a noble answer from the experimental testimony of which I am now speaking: and this shall be the sixth property of this inward witness.

VI. It is such a witness to the truth of the christian religion, as does not depend on the exact truth of letters and syllables, nor on the critical knowledge of the copies of the Bible, nor on this old manuscript, or on the other new translation: for how great soever the difference may be between the various ancient copies of the books of scripture, or the elder or later translation of it, either in protestant or popish countries; yet the substance of christianity is so scattered through all the New Testament, and especially among the epistles, that every manuscript and every translation has enough of the gospel to save souls by it, and make a man a christian indeed. How full of noise and controversy has the christian world been, especially in the learned ages of it, in order to adjust and settle the true books of scripture, the true verses, and the true reading! How many doubtful words have crept into some of the written copies by the mistakes of transcribers! And how exceeding hard, if not impossible, is it in many cases to judge which was the true and authentic word or sentence! But the humble and sincere christian has learned so much of the same gospel, in which all copies agree, as has renewed his sinful nature, and wrought a divine life in him, and therefore he is sure the substance of this gospel must be from God. Nay, if this property of the inward witness be duly considered a little further in the nature and attendants of it, we shall find that every true christian has a sufficient argument and evidence to support his faith, without being able to prove the authority of any of the canonical writings. He may hold fast his religion, and be assured that it is divine, though he cannot bring any learned proof that the book that contains it is divine too; nay, though the book itself should ever happen to be lost or destroyed: and this will appear with open and easy conviction, by asking a few such questions as these:

Was not this same gospel preached with glorious success before the New Testament

was written? Were not these same doctrines of salvation by Jesus Christ published to the world by the ministry of the apostles, and made effectual to convert thousands, before they set themselves to commit these doctrines to writing? And had not every sincere believer, every true convert, this blessed witness in himself, that christianity was from God? Eight or ten years had past away, after the ascension of Christ, before any part of the New Testament was written, (as learned men conceive) and what unknown multitudes of christian converts were born again by the preaching of the word, and raised to a divine and heavenly life, long ere this book was half finished or known, and that among heathens as well as Jews! And though the scriptures of the Old Testament might prepare the minds of some of these to receive the gospel; yet we have reason to believe, that great numbers, especially of the gentile world, were convinced by miracles and tongues, and some, perhaps by mere narratives and exhortations, and became holy believers; each of them *the epistle of Christ written in the heart*, and bearing about within them a noble and convincing proof that this religion was divine, and that without a written gospel, without epistles, and without a Bible.

Again, In the first ages of christianity, for several hundred years together, how few among the common people were able to read! How few could get the possession or the use of a Bible, when all sacred as well as profane books must be copied by writing! How few of the populace, in a large town or city, could obtain or could use any small part of scripture, before the art of printing made the word of God so common! And yet millions of them were regenerated, sanctified, and saved by the ministration of this gospel. The sum, and sense, and substance of this divine doctrine, communicated to the nations in various forms of speech, and in different phrases, made a divine impression on their minds, being attended by the power of the blessed Spirit; and while it stamped its own sacred image on their souls, it transformed their natures into holy and heavenly, and created so many new witnesses to the truth of the gospel, for it begun eternal life in them.

Consider then, christians, and be convinced, that the gospel has a more noble inward witness belonging to it, than is derived from *ink and paper*, from precise letters and syllables: and though God, in his great wisdom and goodness, saw it necessary that the New Testament should be written, to preserve these holy doctrines uncorrupted through all ages; and though he was pleased to appoint the written word to be the invariable and authentic rule of our faith and practice, and make it a glorious instrument of instructing ministers and people to salvation in all these later times: yet christianity has a secret witness in the hearts of believers, that does not depend on their knowledge and proof of the authority of the scriptures, nor of any of the controversies that in late ages have attended the several manuscript copies, and different readings and translations of the Bible.

Now this is of admirable use and importance in the christian life, upon several accounts: As,

1. If we consider how few poor unlearned christians there are, who are capable of taking in the arguments which are necessary to prove the divine authority of the sacred writings; and few, even among the learned, can well adjust and determine many of the different readings, or different translations of particular scriptures. Now a wise christian does not build his faith and hope merely upon any one or two single texts, but upon the general scope, sum, and substance of the gospel, the great doctrines of the satisfaction

for sin, by the blood of Christ; and the renewal of our corrupt natures by the Holy Spirit, the necessity of faith in Christ, repentance of sin, and sincere holiness, in order to salvation and heavenly glory; and by these he feels a spiritual life of peace and piety begun in him: and here lies his evidence that christianity is divine, and that these doctrines are from heaven, though a text or two may be written false, or wrong translated, or though a whole book or two may be hard to be proved authentic.

The learned well know what need there is of turning over the histories of ancient times, of the traditions and writings of the fathers, and authors, pious and profane; what need of critical skill in the holy languages, and in ancient manuscripts; what a wide survey of various circumstances of fact, time, place, style, language, &c. is necessary to confirm one or another book or verse of the New Testament, and to answer the doubts of the scrupulous, and the bold objections of the infidel; what laborious reasonings are requisite to found our faith on this bottom. Now how few of the common rank of christians, whose hearts are inlaid with true faith in the Son of God, and real holiness, have leisure, books, instructions, advantages, and judgment, to make a thorough search into these matters, and to determine, upon a just view of argument, that these books were written by the sacred authors whose names they bear, and that these authors were under an immediate inspiration in writing them? What a glorious advantage is it, then, to have such an infallible testimony to the truth of the gospel wrought and written in the heart by renewing grace, as does not depend on this laborious, learned, and argumentative evidence of the divine authority of the Bible, or of any particular book or verse of it!

2. If we consider what bold assaults are sometimes made upon the faith of the unlearned christian, by the deists and unbelievers of our age, by disputing against the authority of the scripture, by ridiculing the strange narratives and sublime doctrines of the Bible, by setting the seeming contradictions in a blasphemous light, and then demanding, "How can you prove, or how can you believe, that this book is the word of God, or that the religion it teaches is divine?" In such an hour of contest, how happy is the christian, that can say, "Though I am not able to solve all the difficulties in the Bible, nor maintain the sacred authority of it against the cavils of wit and learning; yet I am well assured that the doctrines of this book are sacred, and the authority of them divine: for when I heard and received them, they changed my nature, they subdued my sinful appetites, they made a new creature of me, and raised me from death to life; they made me love God above all things, and gave me the lively and well-grounded hope of his love: therefore, I cannot doubt but that the chief principles of this book are heavenly and divine, though I cannot so well prove that the very words and syllables of it are so too; for it is the sense of scripture, and not the mere letters of it, on which I build my hope." I might say yet further,

3. This inward witness gives great support in hours of darkness, and temptations of the devil, when such sudden thoughts shall be thrown into the mind even of a learned christian: "What if the scripture should not be divine? What if this gospel and the other epistle should not be written by inspiration? What if these should be merely the words of men, and not the very word of God?" The believer, who feels a renewed nature, and a divine life working within him, can boldly repel these fiery darts of Satan with such a reply as this: "Though I cannot at present recollect all the arguments that prove Matthew, Mark, and Luke, to be divine historians, or Peter and

Paul to be inspired writers; yet the substance and chief sense of their gospels, and their epistles, must needs be divine, and God is the author of it, for it has begun the spiritual and eternal life in my soul; and this is my witness (or rather the witness of the Spirit of God within me) that Christ *is the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners*, and the religion I profess and practise is safe and divine."

And though there are many and sufficient arguments drawn from criticism, history, and human learning, to prove the sacred authority of the Bible, and such as may give abundant evidence to an honest inquirer, and full satisfaction that it is the word of God; yet this is the chief evidence that the greatest part of christians can ever attain of the divine original of the holy scripture itself, as well as the truth of the doctrines contained in it, *viz.* That they have found such a holy and heavenly change passed upon them by reading or hearing the propositions, the histories, the promises, the precepts, and the threatenings of this book: and thence they are wont to infer, that the God of truth would not attend a book, which was not agreeable to his mind, with such glorious instances of his own power and grace. Though it must be still confessed, that this argument is much stronger, and the evidence brighter for the general truth of christianity, than it can possibly be for the sacred authority of any one verse or chapter of the New Testament.

I have dwelt the longer on this sixth property of the inward witness, because I think it of great importance in our age, which has taken so many steps towards heathenism and infidelity: for this argument or evidence will defend a christian in the profession of the true religion, though he may not have skill enough to defend his Bible.

This Sermon may be divided here, if it be too long.

VII. This is an universal witness to the truth of the gospel; for it belongs to every true christian. The weak, as well as the strong, enjoy this inward evidence in some measure and degree. This is an argument of some force and conviction to him, who is but young in grace and knowledge, as well as to him that has made high advances in the faith, and is grown up to the stature of a man in *Christ*. Though it must be acknowledged, that where faith and love, holiness and peace, are weak, the evidence of this testimony is weak also; yet it may sometimes stand firm and strong, and shine bright in those christians, whose intellectual powers are but mean and low. Some persons of great holiness, may have but little natural parts, poor understandings, a mean education, and can scarce give any clear rational account of the things of this world, or of that which is to come; and these enjoy a great degree of this inward witness to the truth of christianity, that a divine life is begun in them, and that the gospel has effectually wrought in them *a new nature; those great and precious promises of the gospel having made them partakers of the divine nature*, they are sure those promises must be divine, 2 *Pet.* i. 4. and 1 *Cor.* i. 22, 23. *Not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God hath chosen the poor, and the weak, and foolish things of this world, to confound the wise and the mighty:* nor yet hath he chosen, or called one of them, without giving them a sufficient witness to the truth of that gospel, by and to which they are called. Though they cannot argue for the doctrine of *Christ*, yet they find *Christ dwelling within them the hope of glory;* Col. i. 27. They find the characters of *Christ* copied out in their hearts, and the life of *Christ*, in some measure, transcribed in their lives. They find something of sacred influence from the gospel of Christ,

which no other doctrines can pretend to; therefore, though they cannot give a rational account, which shall answer all the cavils of men, why they believe christianity, through the weakness of their knowledge, yet their faith in Christ is strong; for they are sure the doctrine is divine, because of the sweet and sanctifying influence it has upon them. How condescending is God to poor sinners, to give such a religion to be saved by, that every one who receives it shall have an infallible witness in himself of the truth of it, without the learning of the schools, and the knowledge of tongues! Their chief argument for it is, they have divine holiness, and divine peace.

VIII. This inward witness of the truth of christianity is, or should be, always growing and improving. The testimony increases as the divine love increases; the greater the degree of holiness we arrive at, the more are we confirmed in the truth of christianity, the testimony grows stronger, 2 *Cor.* iii. 18. You find that text approves of what I have now argued. When the apostle had been distinguishing between the religion of the law, and that of the gospel; that the one was covered with a veil, but under the other this veil was taken away: We, says he, under the gospel, *with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory. We who behold the face of Christ Jesus* in his gospel, we who here see a God reconciled in and by the death of his Son, we who see the holiness of Christ here described, copied, and exemplified, *we are changed into the same image.* The image of Christ is transcribed upon our natures, we go on from one degree of it to another; we are changed *from glory to glory*, from one degree of glorious holiness to another: thereby the gospel appears to have a fairer, a brighter, and a stronger evidence.

Thence it comes to pass, that when christians have grown to a good degree of strength in faith, and great measures of holiness in this world, all the temptations that they meet with to turn them aside from the doctrines of Christ, *are esteemed but as straw and stubble;* they cannot move nor stir them from the faith that is in Jesus, because the evidence hath grown strong with years: and as they have attended long upon the ministration of this gospel, they have found more and more of this eternal life wrought in their hearts; they have got nearer to heaven, they have pressed on continually towards perfection, they have found sweet assurance of the pardon of sin in their conscience, and diviner sensations of the love of God communicated to them, and their own love both to God and man increasing; they have found their hearts more averse to all iniquity, they have felt themselves rising higher and higher above this world, as they have come nearer to the end of their days; and a holy contempt of this world has grown bolder: they take greater delight in God, and more gustful satisfaction in his worship, and in his company: their zeal for his honour is warmer and stronger; they are perpetually employing themselves in contrivances for the glory of God among men. Thus in every part of this spiritual life the testimony increases, the evidence grows brighter, as eternal life advances in them.

In the last place: As it is a growing witness, so it is such an one as never can be utterly lost; and that character of it is derived from the very name, for it is *eternal life.* Where it is once wrought in the soul, it shall be everlasting, it shall never die. *The seed of God abides in those that are born of God;* 1 John iii. 9. *for they are born not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, even the word of God, which lives and abides for ever;* 1 Pet. i. 23. His gospel, which is an *everlasting gospel*, continues that heavenly

work in the soul, which that gospel did first begin. It may be darkened indeed, it may be hidden for a season; sometimes the violent temptations of the evil one may, as it were, stop the mouth of this divine witness; and sometimes, defiling lusts rising upon the face of the soul, may darken these evidences, but can never entirely blot them out. Eternal life must abide for ever, according to the name and nature of it. Though the evidence for a season may be obscure, and may seem to be silent through the power of iniquity, and the strength of temptation; yet this life will resume its activity, and discover itself, because its nature is eternal. It is Christ Jesus living in the soul by the power of his own Spirit; Christ Jesus, who is the eternal principle of life, and his Spirit, which is the eternal Spirit: and where he hath begun to dwell, he shall for ever inhabit. This evidence shall continue to all eternity, and shall give many a sweet reflection to the saints in heaven. "I feel now (says every saint there) that this was a true gospel I trusted in, in the days of my flesh; and this religion was divine, for it hath raised me to these mansions of blessedness. I feel now it was a doctrine came down from heaven, and that Christ Jesus was not an impostor, but the *Son of God* indeed, for he has brought me to his Father's house by this doctrine; he hath seated me upon his own throne, even as he is seated upon the throne of his Father: he hath made me an overcomer by believing this doctrine, even as he himself has overcome." Eternal life itself, in the perfection of it in the future world, shall be a standing and everlasting evidence of the truth of the gospel.

I will now endeavour to draw some few inferences or remarks from the discourse, and then conclude.

I. The first remark is very obvious, how glorious is the gospel of our Lord! How preferable to all other religions! Those which men have invented, are not to come into competition with it; let none of them be named. Even that religion which God himself invented, the religion of the Jews, had not such honourable characters belonging to it, as this of our Saviour hath. Many expressions that are used in the epistles of St. Paul, to shew the superiority of the gospel above the law, are such as give it an infinite advantage and preference: as in point of glory, so in point of evidence too. One was *the letter*, the other is *the spirit;* one was *the ministration of condemnation*, the other of salvation; one *the ministration of death*, the other of life: and as life, spiritual or eternal life, is represented as the peculiar effect and prerogative of the gospel, so it carries more light of evidence with it to confirm its heavenly original; it brings the believing soul much nearer to heaven.

The Jewish religion instituted by Moses, although, by the accompanying power of the Spirit of God, *it wrought effectually* in the hearts of those that sincerely received it, and changed their natures in a saving manner; yet the brightness and glory of this sort of evidence that belonged to that religion, was derived from the gospel, which was hidden under the types of it: nor could it be supposed to have equal brightness or force with the gospel itself, when unveiled, and shining in open light; as I have shewn in the second discourse.

The Jews, when they had offered all their sacrifices for the hope of the pardon of their sins, and looked as far as they could look through the smoke and shadows, to see the Messiah at a distance, could never have their consciences so sweetly released from fears, and the sense of guilt, as christians under the gospel, may enjoy through the blood of Christ: never had they so much communion with God in love, as since it is manifested

by Christ Jesus, the Son of his love, that came *from his bosom.* Never were they raised so high above the world, nor could any of the Jews be so high refined in their hopes and joys, and exult in the view of heavenly glories, as a christian may be, and do, since the veil is withdrawn, and *life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel;* 2 Tim. i. 10. Never could they triumph over all the terrors of death, and the horror and darkness of the grave, as St. Paul the christian often does, and teaches his fellow-saints the same triumphal song; 1 *Cor.* xv. 54, &c. I grant that a single person or two like David, might now and then, by the spirit of rapture and prophecy, be borne far above that dispensation itself, and might have noble views and joys; but the whole church, under that state, had but darker apprehensions of things above this life, and beyond death; their spiritual things were so much mingled and interwoven with a worldly dispensation, and their sanctuary itself called *a worldly sanctuary.* So much carnality entered into the scheme of their constitution, that they could not be raised so high above this world, and the things of this life, as christians under the gospel: they could never have such a sense of forgiving grace, nor so sweet a satisfaction in drawing near to God, as christians now have; nor were they so expressly commanded, nor could, nor did they so gloriously practise the duties of love and forgiveness to men, as the christian religion requires, and works in the hearts of sincere believers.

2d remark. You learn here an excellent rule for self-examination, whether you have true faith or no. If you have, it will be accompanied with this evidence: for this eternal life begun in the soul, does not merely prove that christianity is a true doctrine, but it proves also that the faith of that person is true, where this eternal life is begun. This is mentioned in the foregoing sermon, therefore I shall pass it over briefly. The apostle asserts this sufficiently, ver. 13. *These things have I written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that ye may know ye have eternal life.* The duties of morality, both of the first and second table, will be written upon the heart, and will, in some degree, be practised in the life, where the gospel is written in the heart, and where christianity is wrought in its power in the soul. But, on the other hand, those who neglect the duties of the first table, or indulge themselves in a very careless performance of them; those who pass by the duties of the second table, and those relative engagements which they lie under to their neighbour by the law of God, can never have the evidence within themselves, neither of the truth of christianity, nor of the truth of their own faith: they may be heathens, they may be heroes, they may be philosophers, they may be any thing but christians.

3d remark. Learn the true method of confirming your souls in the christian faith: seek daily greater degrees of this divine life wrought in you. This advice is also hinted by the apostle John, in the 13th verse, *I have written these things to you* concerning the witness of christianity, that consists in having *eternal life* begun in you, not only that ye may know ye have it, but that ye may go on to *believe on the name of the Son of God.* We have need in our day to be well seasoned with arguments against the dangers of the times, and the temptations of the age in which we dwell. Christianity begins to be a stumbling-block, and the doctrine of the gospel is called folly; it is reproached to a very great and shameful degree, in a nation, which in public professes christianity. When we therefore shall be attacked with arguments to baffle our faith, and when the *wind of false doctrine* shall grow strong, and shall carry away many; how shall we be able to stand our ground, and hold fast our faith in Christ, if we have not this inward witness,

the beginnings of eternal life? Therefore it is that so many christians waver and are led away, sometimes to this new doctrine, sometimes to another, because they feel so little of the efficacy and power of the gospel in their hearts, so very little of holiness and eternal life within them.

If you cannot argue for the gospel with learning, nor from experience, what will ye do in an hour of temptation? For the most part, christians are too little bred up to those methods of knowledge, whereby they might be capable of giving large, and rational, and satisfactory answers to those that may set themselves to oppose the truth and progress of the gospel. What will you do in the darkness of such a temptation, when those that are learned and ingenious shall attack your faith, and say, "Why do you believe in Jesus?" If you have this answer ready at hand, "I have found the efficacy and power of the gospel on my heart;" this will be sufficient to answer all their cavils. It was one way whereby christianity was confirmed in the hearts of the martyrs of old, and whereby they were enabled to bear up against all oppositions, because they found such a divine efficacy attending the gospel, such a new and heavenly life wrought in them, as enabled them to go through great hardships for the sake of Christ. But this leads me to,

4. The fourth remark, *viz.* If there be this inward evidence belonging to the gospel, and those that truly believe, then you have a strong encouragement to profess christianity under the greatest persecutions. It will bear you out, it carries its own evidence with it; christianity in the heart will give courage against temptation. *Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial*, says the apostle Peter, for in such a fiery trial the gospel hath secured thousands; therefore, says St. Paul, though I meet with reproaches wheresoever I go, *though bonds and imprisonments await me*, and death itself, Acts xx. 23. *yet I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ*, Rom. i. 16. *for it is the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth.* Which is but the sense of my text in other words. Every one that believes it in truth, hath this evidence *in himself, even eternal life: Therefore I count not my life dear to me, &c.* for the gospel will bear me out in my profession of it, in my publication of it, and in my suffering for it. This is the way we shall learn *to resist unto blood*, and seal the truth of this gospel with our mortal lives, if we have the seal of this truth abiding in our souls.

5th remark. As from this doctrine you have strong encouragement to profess christianity, so you are here taught the best way to honour the gospel, and to propagate the christian religion in the world. Make this inward divine testimony appear to the world; let the eternal life that is wrought in your souls by this gospel, express itself in all your outward behaviour amongst men. Thus the primitive christians did, and it was their work to propagate the faith of Christ this way. The gentiles and unbelievers were *won by their conversation;* 1 Pet. iii. 1. Thus the apostles did, who were as so many captains and officers in the army of christians, going before the camp, and making war against all the idolatry of the heathens. They made that eternal life which was wrought in their souls, appear publicly, and discover itself unto men, and hereby the gospel gained victory and triumph wheresoever it went. When those who were ignorant of faith and its power, came into the assemblies of christians, and found the gospel to be a doctrine of such divine attendants, it convinced their consciences, and changed many of them into new creatures; they fell down, and confessed that *there is a God among the christians of a truth.* When they see *your conversation*, when they behold your faith and holy fear, your zeal for God, your delight in his worship, your *gentleness*, your *meekness*,

kindness, and *goodness* toward your fellow-creatures, your desire of the salvation of men, and readiness to deny yourselves for their good; when the heathens know and behold this, they shall be won, says the apostle, by such a conversation as this is, to the belief of the same doctrine, and practice of the same duties.

O what unknown millions of arguments would support and adorn the doctrine of Christ, if every professor of it had this inward testimony working powerfully in the soul, and breaking forth in the life! How effectually would it silence the most impudent objectors! When they shall put that question to you, "*What do you more than others?*" You would make it appear in your lives, that the gospel is true and divine, by challenging all the philosophers, and all the priests and devotees of other religions, to shew such men and women as christians are; such husbands and wives, such parents and children, such masters and servants, such lovers of God and man. O how happy would it be for the christian name and interest in the world, if those who profess the gospel of Christ, could make a bold and universal challenge upon this head! Or when the deists shall insult and say to a believer, What is Jesus of Nazareth *more than another* man, that you love and adore him so? Or in the language of the carnal Jews, *What is thy beloved more than another beloved*, that thou makest so much ado about him? The discovery of Christ reigning in the soul by his renewing grace, will be a sufficient evidence that he is the Son of God, that his character and his person are divine, and his mission is from above; that he is the *chiefest of ten thousand*, and *altogether lovely*.

It is worth while for us now to take a survey of ourselves, to look back upon our lives, and ask, "What testimonies have we given to the glory of this gospel, and to the truth of the religion of Christ? Have we not sometimes rather been scandals to christianity? Have not our practices been blots instead of evidences, and discouragements to the unbeliever, instead of allurements? Have we not sometimes laid *stumbling-blocks* in the way of those that have had the look of an eye, and some tendency of heart towards it?" This will be an awakening thought, and painful to conscience in the review.

Have we not much reason to mourn that there are some among us *who walk as enemies of the cross of Christ?* Philip. iii. 17. I would have you, says the apostle, *be followers of me*, walk, as I walk *as you have me for an example*. I would have you walk as those who have eternal life begun in them, that you may be honours to the gospel. *But there are many who walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, they are enemies of the cross*, and dishonours to the gospel, instead of evidences of the truth of it; their *end is destruction, their god is their belly, and their glory is in their shame;* whereas *our conversation is in heaven, whence we expect Jesus the Saviour;* 18, 19, 20. We who are here upon earth, and have believed the gospel of Christ, we should live as though we had part of ourselves in heaven already, our conversation should be so holy and divine. Eternal life begun in our hearts, should break out, and disclose itself, and shine bright among the persons we converse with. O! how much is the propagation of the gospel obstructed, how much the honour of our Lord Jesus Christ obscured, and how much the good of souls prevented and hindered by those that discover not this eternal life, this sacred witness, in the holiness of heart and practice! *But, beloved, we hope better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak;* Heb. vi. 9. and yet we must speak thus, with a sacred jealousy for the glory and evidence of this gospel, with a warm concern for the peace and welfare of your souls, and with holy zeal for the conversion of the unbelieving world to the faith of God our Saviour.

DIVINE HYMNS FOR SERMONS I. II. AND III.

THE INWARD WITNESS TO CHRISTIANITY.

LONG METRE.

I.

QUESTIONS and doubts be heard no more;
Let Christ and joy be all our theme;
His Spirit seals his gospel sure
To every soul that trusts his name.

II.

Jesus, thy witness speaks within:
The mercy which thy words reveal,
Refines the heart from sense and sin,
And stamps its own celestial seal.

III.

'Tis God's inimitable hand
That moulds and forms the heart anew;
Blasphemers can no more withstand,
But bow and own thy doctrine true.

IV.

The guilty wretch that trusts thy blood
Finds peace and pardon at the cross;
The sinful soul averse to God,
Believes and loves his Maker's laws.

V.

Learning and wit may cease their strife,
When miracles with glory shine;
The voice that calls the dead to life,
Must be almighty and divine.

COMMON METRE.

I.

WITNESS, ye saints, that Christ is true;
Tell how his name imparts
The life of grace and glory too;
Ye have it in your hearts.

II.

The heav'nly building is begun
When ye receive the Lord;
His hands shall lay the crowning stone,
And well perform his word.

III.

Your souls are form'd by wisdom's rules,
Your joys and graces shine;
You need no learning of the schools,
To prove your faith divine.

IV.

Let heathens scoff, and Jews oppose,
Let Satan's bolts be hurl'd;
There's something wrought within you shews
That Jesus saves the world.

SERMON IV.

FLESH AND SPIRIT; OR, THE PRINCIPLES OF SIN AND HOLINESS.

ROM. viii. 1.

——WHO WALK NOT AFTER THE FLESH, BUT AFTER THE SPIRIT.

WHEN we use the words flesh and spirit, in their literal and proper sense, all men know what we mean by them: Flesh generally signifies the animal nature, that is, the body and blood, &c. and spirit means an intelligent nature that has understanding and will. When these are attributed to man, they are but other names to express those two distinct beings, the body and soul that make up human nature. But these words are often in scripture used metaphorically, and that in various senses; yet the metaphor, as it stands in my text, hath such justness and propriety in it, that the sense of it is not very difficult to be traced, being happily and nearly derived from the proper and literal meaning. It is plain that St. Paul uses this expression of *walking after the flesh*, to signify a course of sin; and by *walking after the spirit*, he describes a course of holiness. This is the character of such as believe in Christ, and to whom belongs no condemnation, *that they walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit;* they live not in a course of sin, nor according to sinful principles, but follow the principles of holiness that are wrought in them.

Thus the word flesh signifies and includes all the principles and springs of sin that are found in man, whether they have their immediate and distinct residence in the body or in the soul. The word spirit signifies and includes all the principles of holiness that are wrought in any person, whether immediately residing in soul or body. And among the many places of scripture where they are so used, those words of our Lord himself to Nicodemus, *John* iii. 6. seem to make this most evident: *What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the spirit is spirit;* by which he means to assert that what comes by natural generation tends towards sin, and what is derived from the operation of the Spirit of God leads to holiness. Or, more plainly thus; all the principles of sin spring from mere human nature, as derived from our parents, and are called flesh; and, on the contrary, all the principles of holiness spring from the Spirit of God, and are called spirit; and thence his argument derives the necessity of being *born again*, or born from above. In the first part of these two sentences, flesh and spirit are taken literally for the flesh of man, and the Spirit of God. In the latter end of the sentences, flesh and spirit must be taken figuratively, for the principles of sin, and the principles of holiness.

Now since the apostle frequently uses the terms flesh and spirit in the same sense which his Lord and Master put on them, and talks often on this subject; I shall spend this discourse in shewing the grounds of this figure of speech in my text, and in giving a full explication and improvement of it in the following manner:

I. I shall offer some reasons why sin, and the principles of it are represented by the flesh.

II. I shall likewise propose the reasons why the principles of holiness are expressed by the term spirit. And,

III. Draw some useful remarks from the whole.

First, Let me shew why sin is represented by flesh, so often in scripture; and I give these reasons for it:

I. Because fleshly, or sensible objects, are the chief delight and aim of sinners. They pursue them, and they rejoice in them; and these lead away the soul from God to sin. It is the great business of sinners to *fulfil the lusts of the flesh, and make provision for it.* This is their character in St. Paul's writings; to gratify the appetites of the body, to provide for the desires of their animal natures, eating and drinking, and luxury, and lusts of the flesh, are the cares of most unregenerate men. *The lust of the eye*, and the gaieties of life, gold and silver, pomp and equipage, a fine house, a gay appearance in the world, gaudy clothing and glittering ornaments of the body, great splendour in the eyes of men, these are the idols, the gods of sinners; and they are the temptations of the saints too. The things that relate to the flesh, and the enjoyments of this sensible and present life, are the objects of sinful appetites, or of lawful appetite in a sinful degree; and therefore sin is called flesh.

II. Sin is also called flesh, because it is communicated and propagated to us by the parents of our flesh. It is by our flesh that we are a-kin to Adam, the first great sinner, and derive a corrupted nature from him; from this original taint we derive iniquity, as a polluted stream from an unclean fountain; he is the father of a sinful posterity.

Our spirits indeed are formed immediately by God, and being united to these bodies that come from Adam by the laws of creation, we become the children of Adam, and so are partakers of his sinful nature. How this is done, we may learn from other discourses; it is enough here to say, that irregular humours, and motions, and ferments, are transferred and propagated from the first man, even from the same blood of which are formed all the nations of men that dwell upon the face of the earth; *Acts* xvii. 26. These are transmitted down to us the wretched posterity. In some instances this is so evident, that all men see and believe it. How often does the haughty, the peevish, or the choleric temper of the parent, appear in the son or the daughter beyond all contradiction! And often when we see a drunken or a wanton sinner, we cry, "He is the express copy of his father, he borrows his vices as well as his features, and seems to be his perfect image." And though it is not so evident in all men, that they borrow the seeds of iniquity from their predecessors, yet there is proof enough from the word of God, that we are *conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity*, that *man who is born of a woman* is neither clean nor righteous. *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?* It is impossible; for *that which is born of the flesh, is flesh;* Psalm li. 5. Job xv. 14. John iii. 6. Irregular tendencies towards lawful delights, and strong propensities towards unlawful ones; a neglect of God, and aversion to all that is holy or heavenly, with an inclination towards fleshly and sinful objects, are conveyed to us all, even from our first parents. Sinful Adam begat his sons *in his own likeness;* Gen. v. 3. and therefore sin is described by flesh, because it came from the father of our flesh.

III. Another reason why sin is called flesh, is because the chief springs of sin lie most in our fleshly natures; all the while we continue here in this world, the occasions of sin lie much in our body, in our blood, in our natural constitution, in this mortal frame and contexture; fancy and passion, in all their wild irregularities, are much influenced by the flesh and blood. Our bodily senses, our natural appetites, are continually tempting us away from our duty, and leading or enticing us to the commission of sin; or, at least, immediately falling in with temptation; insomuch, that *sin* is said *to work in our members;* Rom. vii. 5. *to reign in our mortal body;* vi. 12. Sinful actions are called *the deeds of the body;* viii. 13. Our sins are called our members, Col. iii. 5. *Mortify by the spirit the deeds of the body*, saith the apostle in one place; *mortify your members which are upon the earth*, saith he in the other place; in both which he means the mortification of sin. He borrows words from the human body to describe sin.

Here let it be noted, that we do not suppose that mere flesh and blood, distinct from the soul, are capable of sin, properly speaking, or can become guilty in a proper sense; for these are but mere matter, and, separate from the mind, cannot be under a moral law, any more than brute creatures: Therefore we say, sin is not formally in the body of man, but it is occasionally there; because the senses and appetites, the parts and powers of the body become very often an unhappy occasion of sin to the soul; and upon this account the apostle often describes sin by the word flesh.

I proceed now to the second thing proposed, and that is, to shew the grounds of this metaphorical use of the word spirit: And there are the same sorts of reasons to be given why this word is used to represent the principles of holiness, as there are why flesh should signify the principles of sin.

I. Because the objects and aim of holy souls are chiefly spiritual, *viz.* God and heaven, invisible and eternal things. Spiritual objects are chief in their esteem, most in their thoughts, and in their desires, and have the first place in their designs and pursuit: As *they that are after the flesh, mind the things of the flesh;* so *they that are after the spirit*, mind *the things of the spirit.* Rom. viii. 5. A saint, who is *spiritually minded*, aims at those things that are more a-kin to the nature of a spirit; he seeks the knowledge of the favour of God, who is the supreme of spirits, the infinite and self-sufficient Spirit, in whose knowledge, and in whose love, all intelligent creatures find a full sufficiency of blessedness. He knows that all created spirits who are holy and happy, are made so by derivations from God's all-sufficient holiness and happiness; and therefore he applies himself with zeal and vigour to all those spiritual exercises of meditation, faith and prayer, wherein God reveals himself and his mercy. The knowledge of God and his worship, of Christ and his gospel, of the Holy Spirit and his grace, is the chief desire of a holy soul: These are the objects of the pursuit of a spiritual man; he has devoted himself to God and things divine; upon account of which, a man is denominated holy, and therefore holiness is called spirit.

The holy man seeks the welfare of his own soul or spirit before that of his flesh; and while sinful men lay out their whole care and contrivance about the body, which must die, and grasp at the things of this life to make *provision for the flesh*, the saint is most concerned about his soul, which is an immortal spirit; he endeavours to rectify those disorders of it, which sin and the flesh have introduced, and is ever diligent to make provision for this soul of his in the spiritual and unseen world, because it must

have a being there for ever. The holy man is most solicitous that his soul may be happy in an unknown hereafter, while the sinner seeks all his happiness here.

As the natural man neglects the two chief Spirits he has any concern with, that is, God and his own soul; so fleshly objects are his chief desire: But the spiritual man despises them all, in comparison of the unseen desirables of the spiritual world. The men of this world take pains to gratify their senses, and indulge every fleshly appetite among the entertainments of this present world; but those who are holy, mortify their sinful passions, and set their affections on things above; *Col.* iii. 1, &c. They look and aim at things that are unseen, that are eternal, while the men of this world look only at the things that are visible and temporal; 2 *Cor.* iv. 18. The sinful many, or multitude of sinners, say, Who will shew us any good? But they seek it only among corn, wine, and oil, &c. The saint prays to his God, *Lord, lift upon me the light of thy countenance; and* this shall *put gladness into my heart more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased,* Psal. iv. 6, 7. This is the first reason why holiness is described by the word spirit.

II. Holiness is represented by the spirit, because it is communicated to us by God the Father of our spirits, even as sin is conveyed down to us by the parents of our flesh. It is wrought in us by his blessed Spirit, whose character it is to be holy. In *Rom.* viii. 13, 14. you see holiness described as receiving its very nature and operation in us from the Spirit of God. As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God; and it is by the spirit we mortify the deeds of the flesh, or body, that so we may live. As they that are born of the flesh are flesh, so they that are born of the spirit are spirit; *John* iii. 6. This is the language of our Lord Jesus Christ. They who have passed through no renewing and reforming change of heart since their natural birth, they are still in a natural sinful state, and the principles of sin are prevalent in them; but they who have been thus changed and renewed by the blessed Spirit of God, have a new and spiritual natural principle and temper given to them, and are made holy. As by being born of man, we become the children of Adam, and gain a sinful nature; so by being born of God we become the sons of God, and gain a divine, a holy nature. We are born of God unto holiness, as we were born of flesh unto sin; 1 *John* iii. 9. *He that is born of God sinneth not;* that is, sin is not his nature and delight, nor his common and allowed practice. We are regenerated and new-created by the Spirit of God; *Titus* iii. 5. *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but of his own mercy hath he saved us, by regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.*

III. Another reason why the principle of holiness is called spirit, is because the chief springs of holiness, and of opposition to sin, are found in the soul or spiritual part, as the springs and occasions of sin are chiefly seated in the flesh.

This is true both in saints and sinners, for even in sinners that have no renewing grace, there is the light of nature, as well as the knowledge of scripture in our nation; there are the powers of reason and conscience; and these judge concerning *vice* and *virtue* that one is to be avoided, and the other practised; these inward and intellectual principles tell us, that sin is offensive to God our Maker; that it exposes us to his anger, and deserves terrible punishment; and by the exercise and influence of natural reason, added to the knowledge of scripture, and by the inward stings and sharp reproofs of natural conscience, many an evil motion of the flesh is suppressed, many an inordinate appetite and passion subdued, and many a grosser sin prevented. Now though all this

is not properly called holiness, till the nature itself be renewed, the love of sin broken, and the love of God wrought in the heart; yet it is evident that those principles which resist sin, and have any distant tendencies toward holiness, lie chiefly in the mind or spirit.

This is yet more evident in a saint, a man that is regenerated and sanctified by grace: For though in such a person, the body as well as the spirit, may be in part sanctified; that is, some of its irregular appetites may be much weakened and subdued; yet still I cannot help supposing that the spirit or soul, has a greater share of sanctification than the flesh in this life. It is in the soul that the love of God is wrought by the Holy Spirit; it is the soul that repents of past sins, and watches against temptation; it is the soul that believes the gospel, and trusts in our Lord Jesus Christ; it is the soul that by faith takes a distant prospect of heaven and hell, and converses with invisible things beyond the reach and power of flesh and sense: It is by the powers of the soul enlightened and renewed, that we come to see the value and excellency of religion, and spiritual things above temporal; and are inclined to chuse God for our only happiness, and Jesus Christ *as the way to the Father.* The understanding and will are faculties of the soul, and the flesh has no part in their operations. The soul of a believer seems to be the more proper, immediate, and receptive subject of the sanctifying influences of the Spirit of God; and this will appear by consulting the word of God, or the experiences of men.

The word of God leads us very naturally into this sentiment by its constant language. The apostle speaks indeed in one place of being *sanctified wholly*, and our *whole spirit, soul and body*, being preserved *blameless*, &c. 1 Thess. v. 23. But he much oftener expresses sanctification by the *renewing of the mind;* Rom. xii. 2. Renewing of the spirit of the mind; *Eph.* iv. 23. *Though the outward man*, or body, perish, *yet the inward man*, or spirit, *is renewed day by day;* 2 Cor. iv. 16. And the constant language of the scripture calling sin flesh, and holiness spirit, in the saint, intimates that there is more sin in the flesh, and more holiness in the spirit, of one that is sanctified. Thus we read in St. Paul's discourse from the 16th *ver.* of *Romans* vii. to the 25th, where you find him all along distinguishing the flesh and the mind. By one of them he complains in a variety of expressions, that he is led away to sin, while the other of them approves and pursues after holiness; and though the words flesh and spirit are often used for the principles of sin and holiness, yet it may be remarked, that he does not confine himself here to these terms, but uses also the words body and members, to represent sin; inward man, and mind, when he points to the springs of holiness; which would lead one very naturally to believe that there is more sanctification in the mind or soul of a believer, and more of the occasions of sin remaining in his body or flesh.

We may find this also in a great measure from our own experience: We are tempted to many more sins by our various carnal appetites and senses, than by the mere inclinations that belong to the mind, which are purely intellectual. There are indeed the lusts or sinful desires of the mind, as well as *the lusts of the flesh;* Eph. ii. 2. There is a sinful curiosity of the mind; such was part of the temptation of Eve, a desire to know evil as well as good; there is a spiritual malice and envy against God and his saints; there is a spiritual pride of intellectual endowments, &c. and some of these are found too much in true christians as well as in unbelievers; yet it must be acknowledged from constant observation, that the lusts of the flesh are much more frequent, more numerous, and more powerful in the greatest part of men; and it is manifest that acts of religion and holiness, and exercises of grace, begin more frequently in the inward inclination of the spirit, dis-

tinguished from the flesh, as sin more frequently begins in and from the flesh itself, either in the outward or inward parts and powers of it.

Surely if our souls were sanctified by divine grace, but so much as many are in this world, and had no flesh about them, they would not sin so much as they do. When we are engaged in the exercise of grace, or performance of spiritual duties, such as meditation, prayer, delighting in God, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, we should not be so soon weary of it, nor so immediately called away from it by the mere vanity or wandering of our minds, if we had no fleshly objects about us, no outward senses, no inward treasures of fancy, no appetites of the body to start up and mingle with our religion, to clog us in our sacred work, to make us grow weary under it, and draw us from it. How often must a saint say, "My soul is sincerely set against every sin, and I fear to offend him whom my soul loveth; *with my mind I serve the law of God*, and I watch against every rising iniquity: But my outward senses, or the inward ferments of fleshly appetite or passion, surprize me before I am aware, and defile my soul. Sometimes my spirit wrestles hard *with flesh and blood;* I summon all the powers of reason and scripture, conscience and christianity; I make a firm stand for a season, and maintain a brave and painful resistance; but the restless and perpetual assaults of fancy or passion, at last overpower the feeble spirit, and I sinfully submit and yield to the fretful or the luxurious humours of the body; and thus the brutal powers overcome the mind, and *I am led away captive to sin.* If I had not an eye, I had not been drawn away to the commission of this folly; if I had not an ear, I had not been tempted from God at such a season; if I had not such appetites or senses in exercise, I had been secured from many a snare; if I did not wear this flesh about me, which is so fond and tender of itself, and so impetuous and active in the pursuit of its own ease and satisfaction, I had not shrunk away at such a time from a dangerous duty; I had not been so fearful and cowardly at such a place in the profession of my faith, nor so often polluted my soul with sensualities, and made work for bitter repentance."

Thus the experience of christians and the language of scripture concur in this point, that the occasions of sin evidently lie most in the flesh: and a contradiction or opposition to sin, proceeds more from the spirit.

It is true indeed, and must be confessed, that the soul being but in part sanctified, too often complies with these *motions of sin which work in our members;* and the affections of the soul itself, being not perfectly holy, are too easily induced to indulge the desires and passions of the flesh; and thereby sin is committed, and guilt contracted. *The law*, or principle, *of sin in the members*, leads the mind, too often, captive; *Rom.* vii. 23. Thus the soul is very culpable for want of perpetual resistance, and becomes guilty before God, by every such inordinate passion breaking forth, and by the satisfaction of every such sinful raging appetite: yet I must believe that the soul of a christian would not be guilty half so often, if the lusts of the body were not more active than the mere abstracted lusts of the mind are. *The spirit lusteth against the flesh, and the flesh against the spirit;* Gal. v. 17. That part which is chiefly sanctified, and that which is chiefly unsanctified, strike against each other; and it is true in a literal sense, as well as in a figurative one, that a saint *with his mind serves the law of God*, but too often *with his flesh the law of sin.*

Thus I have given the chief reasons why the principles of sin are represented in scripture by flesh, and the springs of holiness by spirit.

This Sermon may be divided here.

From this consideration of flesh and spirit, of holiness and sin, which are set forth in the word of God, and thus explained in the most free and intelligible method that I am capable of, I would derive some remarks for our information and practice.

Remark I. We may hence derive a rule of judgment concerning our own state, and find whether we have any principle of holiness in our hearts or no, or whether we are yet in the flesh, and in a state of sin. We may draw an easy answer to these questions, by making an inward inquiry into ourselves, according to the three descriptions of flesh and spirit.

First, What are our chief aims and desires? Are they bent to gratify the appetites of the flesh, and set upon sensual enjoyments? Or do we seek and pursue spiritual and eternal things, as our most valuable and lovely portion? What is our chief treasure? Where are our hearts and our hopes? Are they wandering amongst heaps of gold and silver, roving over fair and large estates, entertaining themselves with gay clothing, honours, and vanities? Or are they pointing upwards, and directed towards God, the first and best of beings; and fixed on the blessedness of the spiritual world? Is our chief concern *to make provision for the flesh* and this life, or to secure an inheritance for our souls among the incorruptible glories of the upper world? What is it that sits highest in our esteem, and awakens our warmest affections and brightest joys? Is it God or the creature, heaven or earth, things fleshly or invisible? Let conscience be faithful, and answer to such enquiries.

Again, Let us ask ourselves, have we nothing within us but what was derived from nature and the flesh; or do we find ourselves enriched with divine graces by the influence of the Holy Spirit? Are we the same sort of creatures that we were born; or have we had a mighty change wrought in us, so that we can find in ourselves that we are *born again*, born of the Spirit? Have we new love and new hatred, new designs and pursuits, new joys and sorrows; or are the affections of our souls the same that we brought into the world with us, and engaged chiefly about the affairs of this body, and this temporal life?

Let us enquire, in the third place, whether there be any opposition made by our spirits against fleshly passions and appetites? Let every one of us ask our souls, What inward conflict do I find in myself? Do I comply with all the sinful tendencies of fleshly nature, or do I maintain a continual resistance? Is there a combat, and, as it were, a duel within me, when temptations present themselves; or am I easily led away, and yield to sin naturally, without any reluctance? Do I find my flesh and spirit at war within me, when any sensual allurements appear; or do I yield up all my powers as *servants to sin*, and comply with the lusts of the flesh, with a hearty delight? Am I like a dead fish, carried down with the stream of my appetites and passions, and make no pretences to oppose the vicious current? If, upon this enquiry, I find that the flesh is sovereign, and the spirit never opposes it, I may pronounce myself then to be in the flesh, in the most significant and complete manner: then I have nothing but flesh in me, and my soul is, as it were, carnalized, and deep immersed in the fleshly life.

I confess there may be some sort of opposition made to fleshly lusts, where there is no renewed nature, no saving grace, no true principle of holiness, such as is described by the spirit in my text. Many a youth resists his inclination to a drinking hour, or unclean iniquities, by the mere force of his education, by the awful regard he has to his parents, by a fear of injury to his health, or of public shame or scandal. Many a wicked man refuses to comply with his corrupt appetites, because he cannot bear the anguish of his own conscience, and the sharp reproaches of his reason and better judgment. And many a guilty passion is restrained and suppressed, from a natural fear of the justice of God, and an everlasting hell, without any inward principle of real piety.

It is not every resistance therefore that we make and maintain against sin, can be a sufficient evidence that we are *new creatures*, unless we can say with St. Paul; *Rom.* vii. 22. *I delight in the law of God after the inward man;* that my soul not only approves, but takes pleasure in holiness; that sin is the object of my utter hatred, as well as my present resistance; and that not only as it promotes my own ruin, but as it brings dishonour to God: that my very heart and soul are set for God and religion, and it is a grief and daily burden to me that there should be any such thing as *a law in my members warring against the law of my mind;* which makes the true christian cry out often with bitterness of soul, *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Rom. vii. 24. Yet still it remains an incontestable truth, that where there is no resistance to the flesh, and the lusts thereof, there persons are not only in a state of sin, but in the strongest bonds of iniquity: they have brutified their human natures, and have made themselves *like the beasts that perish;* such was the character of the Ephesian gentiles when the gospel came first among them, they were *alienated from the life of God,* and being past feeling, gave themselves up to work all uncleanness with greediness. *Eph.* iv. 18, 19.

Remark II. There may be some spirit in a person where there is much flesh; some holiness where there is much sin. For as none but saints in heaven are all spirit, and as the unregenerate are all flesh; so the saints here upon earth, are some flesh and some spirit, because they are sanctified but in part; they are in their way towards perfection, but they are not perfect: The spirit and the flesh conflict in them, *so that they cannot do the things which they would.* As they cannot serve God and practise holiness, with such constancy and zeal as they desire, because of the lusting of the flesh; so neither can they sink so far into sin, nor indulge evil courses so far as the flesh would lead them, if they had no strivings of the spirit to resist it, no principles of regeneration or holiness. They are led away indeed many times by sensual and fleshly allurements, but the chief objects of their pursuit are spiritual and heavenly; they have too many of the same vain affections and sinful desires, that were born of the flesh, remaining in them; but they have also new thoughts and hopes, new inclinations and appetites towards divine things, which could not be derived but from heaven, and prove them to be born of the spirit.

As unreasonable as it is therefore for any sincere christians to say, they are complete in holiness, or pretend to perfection in this life, because they find a work of grace in them; so it is equally unreasonable for them to charge themselves with being altogether carnal and unregenerate, because they find some of the lusts of the flesh warring in them. I would say, therefore, with compassion to such humble and doubting souls, while you are inhabitants in flesh, and your sanctification is imperfect, you will not have perfect

peace, there will ever be some enemies within, for you to conflict with; and this inward war, this battle with flesh and blood, with self and sin, will by no means prove that ye are utterly unsanctified: No, it will rather give you some reasons to hope, that there may be a principle of holiness wrought in you, because you find a resistance against the flesh; especially if you experience also a zeal and hatred against every rising iniquity. The most holy soul in this life, can never prevent all the motions of irregular appetite: and the best of christians have much ado to curb and suppress some sinful affections which spring from this mortal body. The chiefest of saints had reason to complain that he was too often *led captive by the law of sin in his members;* Rom. vii. 23.

It is true indeed, if we were completely sanctified, if our spirits were entirely holy, they would constantly and effectually resist all evil motions and appetites of the flesh, so that they should not bring forth the fruits of iniquity and guilt: but where this resistance is not always effectual, yet if it be constant and sincere and flow from a real hatred of sin, there the heart is renewed, and the spiritual life begun. Let trembling christians therefore be encouraged, though they may find many vexing ferments of the flesh, and disquieting passions sometimes stirring within them; let them not cast away their hope, but let them rather rejoice in the promises of the covenant, and go on daily to cleanse themselves, by the aids of divine grace, *from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God;* 2 Cor. vii. 1.

Remark III. What bold and impious folly are those guilty of, who give a loose to all the appetites and lusts of the flesh, under a pretence that it is their temper and constitution leads them to it; that it is their nature inclines them to riot in all luxury and wantonness; and that they do but follow the leadings of nature? I would reason a little with persons of such a profligate character, if they have not renounced reason as well as religion.

1. Consider, sinners, whether you are not under a great mistake, while you say, that you obey all the dictates of nature when you rush on to fleshly iniquities. Have you no natural conscience within you that forbids these vile practices? Has it not given you many a check already, and many an inward reproach? Have you no reason that tells you that there is a God, and a judgment, and a terrible account one day to be given of the guilt and madness which you now indulge? It is but one part of your nature then, and that the meanest and the vilest too, whose dictates you obey, when you give yourselves up to all intemperance. The very heathens have such a conscience in them, such *a law written in their hearts,* to forbid, and to condemn the grosser iniquities; Rom. ii. 15. and such an inward monitor belongs to your nature too, unless you have entirely subdued and enslaved your spirits, which are the best part of your natures, to the tyranny of your flesh; unless you have buried your reason in brutal appetite, and *seared* your *conscience as with a hot iron,* that they may neither feel nor speak.

2. You say, it is nature you obey, while you follow after fleshly lusts; but is it not nature depraved and spoiled? Can you think it is the pure, the original and uncorrupted nature of man to follow all the appetites of flesh and blood, and live upon a level with *the brutes that perish?* Can you imagine that your spirit and reason, and all the glorious powers of your intellectual nature in their first perfection, were made to be thus employed as lackeys to the body, and mere purveyors to the flesh? Is it not a sign your nature is fallen from its original state, while these meaner powers of sense and passion have so mighty and sovereign an influence; and is it not rather the dictate of

reason, and nature, and true self-love, that you should seek the recovery of your original excellencies, that you should use all methods to stop and heal the diseases of your nature, and to repair these ruins of humanity.

But, 3. Suppose it were the inclination of animal nature in its original frame, to be intemperate, proud, angry, impatient, and luxurious; and suppose all the present evil appetites and passions of the flesh, were the attendants of man in his first estate; yet has not God your Creator and Governor, a right to place you in a state of trial, in order to future rewards and punishments? And may he not forbid your spirit to comply with these inclinations of nature and the flesh, as a test of your obedience to God your Maker? Is it not proper there should be some difficulties to conquer in such a probationary state? And if the God who made you, has actually appointed the matter of your probation or trial, to be a conflict of the spirit with flesh and blood, has he not a right to make this appointment? And does not your own reason and conscience tell you, that you deserve his anger and severe punishment, if you abandon yourself to all the wild motions and extravagancies of bodily appetite, which he requires you to resist and subdue?

Bethink yourselves, O sinners, how you will answer it to God another day; that when he has given you a soul, a spirit, a conscience to fight against fleshly lusts, you should nourish and indulge them hourly? When he has offered his grace to change your corrupt natures, and has sent his only Son, and his eternal Spirit to purchase pardon for past sins, and to make new creatures of you; when he has taught you your duty, and offers divine aids to fulfil it; when he both entreats you as a friend, and commands you as a God, to resist these lusts of the flesh effectually, and be for ever holy and happy: that you should neglect the laws and mercies of a great and condescending God, and still run riot in the pursuit of forbidden passions and pleasure? *Can your hearts endure, or your hands be strong* in the day that the God of vengeance *shall appear in flaming fire*, to make enquiry into such rebellion? Can you be so stupid as to hope, that the poor pretences of flesh and nature, will screen you from just and almighty indignation? Awake, awake, O mistaken creatures, and let the man within you resume its place, and reason and conscience do their office. Awake from this vain and dangerous dream, this fatal security, and wilful blindness. Rouse the powers of your souls to arm, and fight in opposition to the sinful flesh; arise and bestir yourselves ere the time of trial be ended, and the decisive sentence of an offended God, doom you to miseries that have no end.

Remark IV. In this description of the principles of sin and holiness, as seated in our flesh, or in our spirit, we may see the nature of the christian warfare; that much of it consists in a fight of the spirit with flesh and blood. Little do some christians consider how much of religion lies in watching over their appetites and senses, and setting a guard upon the sinful tendencies of the flesh; little do they think how much of their piety and their holy peace depends on keeping down this flesh, and subduing it to the best service of the soul.

There may be some persons, who under pretence of serving God in the spirit, and the more exalted and refined notions and practices of christianity, give a loose to the flesh, in eating, and drinking, and dressing, and all the luxuries of life. But can these christians imagine, that when they pamper and indulge that wherein sin is chiefly seated, their spirits should long maintain their purity and heavenly mindedness? St. Paul was of

another mind; 1 *Cor.* ix. 27. *I keep under my body*, says he; I fight with my flesh which is my great enemy, υπωπιαζω και δηλαγωγω, I subdue it, and bear it down, as with heavy blows, I keep it under as a slave, lest *when I have preached to others, I myself should become a cast-away;* lest, when I have preached to others the doctrine of mortifying the flesh, and of walking according to the spirit, I should indulge such fleshly sins as would prove my eternal ruin.

Let not any man imagine, that I am here teaching the Romish penances, and monkish severities: there is no necessity of sack-cloth and beggary, scourging and starving, in order to keep the body fit for the duties of religion. Surely there is a medium between the self-indulgence of some lazy and carnal christians, and the superstitious forms of mortifying the flesh, practised in the popish church; and if, under a pretence of sublime spirituality, we let the fleshly appetites get the mastery of us, the prosperity, and even the safety of the soul, will be in extreme hazard; for St. Peter and St. Paul agree well in this doctrine, that *fleshly lusts war against the soul;* 1 Pet. ii. 11.

I confess the apostle tells the Ephesians, chap. vi. *ver.* 12. *We wrestle not against flesh and blood, &c.* But it is plain he means no more, than that flesh and blood are not our only enemies, but that we wrestle also *with principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness, i. e.* with Satan and the powers of darkness. Yet we must remember that the powers of darkness chiefly attack our spirits by means of our flesh. I cannot believe they would have so much advantage over our souls as they have, if our souls were released from flesh and blood. Satan has a chamber in the imagination, fancy is his shop wherein to forge sinful thoughts; and he is very busy at this mischievous work, especially when the powers of nature labour under any disease, and such as affects the head and the nerves: he seizes the unhappy opportunity, and gives greater disturbances to the mind, by awakening the images of the brain in an irregular manner, and stimulating and urging onwards the too unruly passions. This crafty adversary is very ready to fish, as we say, in troubled waters, where the humours of the body are out of order. Thus he is wise to make his advantage of all our weaknesses, and to gain some interest in them, to execute his hellish designs thereby; 2 *Cor.* xii. 7. *A messenger of Satan* and *a thorn in the flesh*, were both together troublesome to St. Paul: whether they became two distinct enemies, or one strengthened by the influence of the other, is hard to determine; but thus much seems to be intimated, that some troublesome disorder in the flesh, gave a great occasion to Satan to buffet St. Paul more severely, and do him more mischief.

It is hard wrestling for a poor sanctified soul, with so violent and strong a yoke-fellow as our flesh. The powers of the flesh twine about our feeble spirit, and often pull it to the ground, and get the mastery of it. *The just man may fall down seven times, and rise again; but the wicked fall into mischief*, and attempt not to rise; *Prov.* xxiv. 16. We are tied to the flesh while we are here, and it is the biggest, and the hardest part of our state of trial, to be constantly tied to such flesh as ours is. All the adversaries we have besides, are not equal to the adversary that dwells with us, nor is all their power equal to the power of our flesh and blood, with its restless urgencies, leading us away from God to sin. There is so close a union between flesh and spirit, in this state, that we carry our prison about us, even the flesh in which we inhabit: we drag our chains about with us; we are tied down to our senses; we are too nearly allied to the passions and appetites of this animal in which the soul dwells, and these the soul cannot master

and subdue entirely: however, let us wrestle *with flesh and blood*, as well as with the tempting world, and the malice of Satan; let us bestir ourselves, and *fight the good fight of faith*, for the crown is worth the labour of the conquest.

Yet there is another difficulty attends this part of our spiritual warfare, *viz.* This is a combat to which *the Captain of our Salvation* did not lead us on in person, and in which Christ never went before us. It is a labour of piety in which our blessed Saviour was not our pattern; nor could he be, for he had no principle of sin in his soul, nor any sinful motion in all his sensitive powers. His flesh itself, in a literal sense, was born of the Spirit, and he was all spirit, all holy. *The Holy Ghost* overshadowed the blessed virgin; *and that holy thing that was born of Mary*, was sanctified in its original, and united to the eternal Son of God; *Luke* i. 35. Never had he one disorderly passion; never one vicious appetite, no criminal wish, no guilty inclination; he knew no excessive tendencies towards a lawful object, nor did he feel any inward propensity toward an unlawful one. *He took part* of flesh and blood, indeed, because *the children were partakers of it: in all things was he made like to his brethren, but without sin*, and tempted in all points, as we are, except this inward and native temptation; *Heb.* ii. 14, 17, and iv. 15. This part of our warfare, therefore, we have no perfect pattern for; the leader of the holy army never went through these special and sore conflicts, in which our spirits are daily engaged, even the war with corrupt nature and sinful flesh: yet he pities and sympathizes with us; for, as God, he knows our whole frame perfectly; and he knows, as man, what our flesh is, and what its sinful appetites are, so far as his holy nature will admit of this sympathy. In such a case as this, which he never experienced, yet he supplies us with such grace as is effectually suited to relieve these agonies; and the kind angel of the covenant will be at our right hand, to strengthen the sincere combatants, that they be not overcome.

Remark V. How much do our fellow-christians deserve our pity, that labour under great difficulties, and great darkness, through the perverse humours of their flesh? through the untoward constitutions of their nature, through the peevish, or proud, or malicious, or passionate tempers of their mortal body?

Some have a more wrathful, some a more wanton mixture of blood and natural spirits; others again more melancholy in their constitution, are ready to overwhelm themselves with despair and unbelieving sorrows; they go on fighting and mourning all the day long, with many a violent contest, many a groan and struggle, many a sharp combat, and perhaps with many a wound too. They are often upon their knees for strength to subdue this ever present enemy the flesh, and can gain but little advantage; they are fighting from day to day, and their sins are so powerful still, that they think they never get nearer to the conquest: they labour and toil, pray and endeavour to obtain divine assistance, and yet are too often overcome. This is the case of many a christian who hath some strong corruption mingled with his constitution. Let us pity such, and pray for them too, and not be hasty in censuring their character and their state: Bless God if your constitution be of a happier mould, and if your trials are not so great, and your temptations so heavy as theirs.

But you will say, "They sin often, and fall very foully, and dishonour religion more than you." It may be so: but it may be they fight harder than you do, and labour with more assiduity, and exercise more grace than ever you did, and yet are more frequently overcome by sin; so strong is the constitutional iniquity in some natures, more

than it is in others. Therefore while you condemn the sin, let not the poor striving mourning sinner be censured heavily as to his character, or as to his state. It was said of a very great man of God heretofore, that he had grace enough for ten men, but not half enough for himself, because his natural constitution was so very violent and passionate.

When thou seest therefore a christian often in sorrow, confessing his follies, and continually humbled under a sense of the levity of his spirit, or the vanity of his natural temper; when he grieves, that in such and such a season, he has indulged unlawful airs, and complied too far with the vices of company, when thou observest his spirit vexed and pained inwardly, that he has indulged any criminal appetite or passion beyond what has been visible in thy own conduct; do not pride thyself in thy own purity, nor disdain thy mourning brother, but say within thyself, "Perhaps he has watched and laboured more than I have done, and yet his own iniquity was too strong for him." Think with thyself that he was wrestling with a giant, and fought hard, and was overcome; but thy own combat was but as it were with a dwarf or a child, with some feebler vice that had less root in thy constitution; and therefore though thou hast laboured less, yet thou hast gained the victory. And to encourage such mourning christians, let me add, that in the future state, it is probable, the saints shall be rewarded not so much according to their actual success and victory, as according to the toil and labour of the combat.

Yet take this caution by the way too: such persons should not think themselves innocent, because they fight harder against sin than others do; let them not think all warnings useless, nor be angry with the gentle admonitions of their friends, as though they were hard censures: for such christians have more need of warning than others, because they are more in danger. They ought to be crying out on themselves continually, *O wretched creature! who shall deliver me?* They should beg reproofs, and say, *Let the righteous smite me, it shall be kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil that shall not break my head;* Rom. vii. 24. Psal. cxli. 5. Let my brethren watch over me, for I find I am not sufficient to be my own keeper; and let them have compassion on me, *plucking me out of the fire*, for I hate, as well as they, *the garment spotted with the flesh;* Jude, *ver.* 23. Thus the flesh must be brought under by constant watchfulness, prayer, and resistance, else we cannot maintain holiness and peace. Take heed therefore, O feeble and tempted christian, while thou art by prayer engaging the heavenly alliance on thy side, that thou let not thy own weapons drop, but maintain the war. The fight is to last but threescore years and ten; if thou overcome, there is the crown of life ready for thee, which Jesus the Judge shall bestow on all the conquerors.

Remark VI. How should we rejoice in hope of that hour that shall release us from this sinful flesh; when we shall serve God in spirit without a clog, without a tempter! O with what a relish of sacred pleasure should a saint read those words in 2 *Cor.* v. 8. *Absent from the body, and present with the Lord!* Absent from this traitor, this vexing enemy, that we constantly carry about with us! Absent from the clog and chain of this sinful flesh, the prison wherein we are kept in darkness, and are confined from God! Absent from these eyes that have drawn our souls afar from God by various temptations! and absent from these ears by which we have been allured to transgression and defiling iniquities! Absent from those lusts and passions, from that fear and that hope, that pleasure and that pain, that love, that desire, and that anger, which are all

carnal, and seated in the fleshly nature, and become the spring and occasion of so much sin to our souls in this state. *Absent from the body, and present with the Lord:* methinks there is a heaven contained in the first part of these words, *absent from the body;* and a double happiness in the last, *present with the Lord:* present with him who hath saved our spirits through all the days of our christian conflict, and *hath given us the* final *victory:* present with that God, who shall eternally influence us to all holiness, who shall for ever shine upon us with his own beams, and make us conformable to his own holy image: present with that Lord and Saviour, from whom it shall not be in the power of all creatures to divert or draw us aside.

It is by our flesh in this world that we are a-kin to so many temptations, a-kin to all the objects that stand around us, to tempt us from our God; and we are ready to cry out, "O the blessed angels that were never a-kin to flesh! O those blessed spirits, who move swift as flames to execute the will of their God, without the incumberance of flesh, without being allured by that most powerful and successful tempter! Happy beings! they know not our toils; they feel them not; they are all spirit: they are all holy! O the blessed saints in glory, that are released from their flesh, which once they had so many, and so sore combats with! Their flesh, which heretofore prisoned them, and pained them, and drew them often away from God, contrary to that heavenly bias that was put upon their souls by God the Sanctifier!"

But we rejoice in hope that our turn shall come too. There is a day of deliverance from this sinful flesh provided for us. All our times are in the hand of God; and the best time, is the time of our release from this sinful companion. Let our faith say, "I read in the promises that this same happiness belongs to me, which the saints above are now possessed of: it is coming, it is coming as fast as time and the heavens can move, as fast as days and hours can remove out of the way." Then we shall have no flesh for the world to lodge one temptation in, nor for Satan to make use of as an engine of his malice, to batter the constancy and duty of our souls; then we shall be freed from all those methods of injury to our spirits, which we receive now by means of the flesh.

Thus at the day of our death is derived a glorious liberty, and thence we date our joys; but our joys rise high indeed, if our faith can but look a little farther, and take a prospect of that day, when our flesh shall be raised in perfect holiness, and our spirits completely holy, shall be rejoined to it; then it shall be no more true, that flesh and spirit lust against each other, and these two are contrary; for flesh and spirit shall both draw one way, both lead us towards our divine original, and the first Father of our beings. Then the law in our members, and the law in our minds, shall concur together to influence us to perfect holiness; then, when our spirits shall be like God, the first and best of Spirits; and when our flesh shall be like the flesh of the Son of God, that great pattern of a glorified body.

And this day will surely come, for our Redeemer with his body is glorified in heaven, and he sits there as a pattern of our bodies to be glorified, and a pledge to assure us of it too. O come the day when he shall change these bodies of our vileness into the form of the body of his glory! and he can easily do it, by that power whereby he can subdue all things to himself; *Phil.* iii. 21. Then shall our flesh and our spirit join sweetly together and each of them fulfil and enjoy their part, in the business and blessedness provided for them in regions of unknown pleasure. *Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMON IV.

FLESH AND SPIRIT; OR, THE PRINCIPLES OF SIN AND HOLINESS.

I.

WHAT vain desires, and passions vain,
Attend this mortal clay!
Oft have they pierc'd my soul with pain,
And drawn my heart astray.

II.

How have I wander'd from my God,
And following sin and shame,
In this vile world of flesh and blood
Defil'd my nobler frame!

III.

For ever blessed be thy grace
That form'd my spirit new,
And made it of an heaven-born race,
Thy glory to pursue.

IV.

My spirit holds perpetual war,
And wrestles and complains,
And views the happy moment near,
That shall dissolve its chains.

V.

Cheerful in death I close my eyes,
To part with every lust;
And charge my flesh whene'er it rise,
To leave them in the dust.

VI.

How would my purer spirit fear
To put this body on,
If its old tempting powers were there,
Nor lusts, nor passions gone!

SERMON V.

THE SOUL DRAWING NEAR TO GOD IN PRAYER.

JOB xxiii. 3, 4.

O THAT I KNEW WHERE I MIGHT FIND HIM! THAT I MIGHT COME EVEN TO HIS SEAT; I WOULD ORDER MY CAUSE BEFORE HIM, AND FILL MY MOUTH WITH ARGUMENTS.

THE FIRST PART.

THIS book of Job might, perhaps, be the first and earliest part of all the written word of God; for learned men, upon good ground, suppose that this history was elder than the days of Moses, and yet it hath many a sweet lesson of experimental religion in it, to teach the disciples of Christ: we may learn many duties and comforts from it in our day, *upon whom the ends of the world are come.* The style of it in some parts is so magnificent and solemn, in others so tender and affectionate, that we must feel something of devout passion when we read this history, if our hearts are but in a serious frame, and if our temper or circumstances of mind or body have any thing a-kin to the grief or piety of this good man.

Job had now heard long stories of accusation from his friends while he was bowed down, and groaning under the heavy providences of God; they *persecuted him whom God had smitten*, and poured in fresh sorrows upon all his wounds. "I will turn aside, saith he, from man, for *miserable comforters are ye all;* and I will address myself to God, even to the God that smites me. *O that I knew where I might find him!*" The stroke of the father doth not make the child fly from him, but come nearer, and bow himself before his best friend: this is the filial temper of the children of God. "*My complaint is bitter*, (saith Job, ver. 2.) because of my sorrows from the hand of God, and from the accusations and reproaches of my friends: you may think I am too lavish in my complainings and my continual cries, but I feel more than I complain of." And therefore Job is set up as a pattern of patience; for he could say, my stroke is heavier than my groaning.

There are some of the children of God who give themselves up to a perpetual habit of complaints and groans, though no trial has befallen them but is common to men; they make all around them sensible of every lesser pain they feel, and being always uneasy in themselves, they take the kindest and gentlest admonition for an accusation; and while they imagine themselves in the case of Job, they resent highly every real or suspected injury: in short, they make a great part of their own sorrows themselves, and then they cry out and complain; and among their dismal complainings, they often, without reason, assume the words of Job as their own, and say, *my stroke is heavier than my groaning.* In some persons this is the temper of their natures, and in others a mere distemper of the body; but both ought to watch against it, and resist it,

because it appears so much like sinful impatience and fretfulness, that it cannot be indulged without sin.

There are others, whose real afflictions are dreadful indeed, and uncommon, who seem to tire all their friends with their complaints too; but, it may be, if we knew all their variety of sorrows, and could take an intimate view of every outward and inward wound, we should acknowledge their stroke was heavier than their groaning; and especially when God is in such a measure absent from them too, that they are at a loss, as Job was, how they should come at him or converse with their heavenly Father: then their souls break out into vehement desires, *O that I knew where I might find him!*

A child of God, who is wont to maintain a constant and humble correspondence with heaven, does often receive such sensible influences of instruction and comfort from the throne of grace, that he is led on sweetly in the path of daily duty, by the guiding providences of God, and by the secret directions of his Holy Spirit. He finds divine pleasure in his morning addresses to the mercy-seat, and returns to the throne in the evening with joy in his heart, and praise upon his tongue. He has something to do with the great God, in a way of humble devotion, in all his important concerns; but if God retire and withdraw from him, he feels and bemoans the divine absence, and his heart meditates grief and complaints; and when at the same time he is pressed with other burdens too, he breathes after God with a sacred impatience, and longs to know where he may find him: then says the soul, "*O if I could but come near to the seat of God in my addresses to him, I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments.*" This brings me to the doctrine, which shall be the subject of my discourse.

Observation. When a christian gets near the seat of God in prayer, he tells him all his sorrows, and pleads with him for relief.

In discoursing on this doctrine, I shall consider four things.

I. How may we know when a soul gets near to God in prayer; or what it is to get near the seat of God.

II. What are the particular subjects of holy converse betwcen God and the soul.

III. Why such a soul tells God all his sorrows.

IV. How he pleads with God for relief.

First, How may we know when a soul gets near the seat of God in prayer.

I answer, there will be some or all these attendants of nearness to God.

I. There will be an inward sense of the several glories of God, and suitable exercises of grace in the soul. For when we get near to God, we see him, we are in his presence; he is then, as it were, before the eyes of the soul, even as the soul is at all times before the eyes of God. There will be something of such a spiritual sense of the presence of God, as we shall have when our souls are dismissed from the prison of this flesh, and see him face to face, though in a far less degree: it is something that resembles the future vision of God in the blessed world of spirits; and those souls who have had much intimacy with God in prayer, will tell you that they know, in some measure, what heaven is. The soul, when it gets near to God, even to his seat, beholds several of his glories displayed there; for it is a seat of majesty, a seat of judgment, and a seat of mercy. Under these three characters is the seat of God distinguished in scripture; and because this word is part of my text, I shall therefore a little enlarge upon these heads.

When the soul gets near to God, it sees him,

1. As upon a seat of majesty. There he appears to the soul in the first notion of his divinity or godhead, as self-sufficient, and the first of beings: he appears there as the infinite ocean, the unmeasurable fountain of being, and perfection, and blessedness; and the soul, in a due exercise of grace, shrinks, as it were, into nothing before him, as a drop, or a dust, a mere atom of being. The soul is in its own eyes at that time, what it is always in the eyes of God, as nothing, and less than nothing and vanity. He appears then in the glory of his all-sufficience, as an Almighty Creator, giving birth, and life, and being to all things; and the soul, in a due exercise of grace, stands before him as a dependent creature, receiving all its powers and being from him, supported every moment by him, and ready to sink into utter nothing, if God withdraw that support. Such is God, and such is the soul, when the soul draws near to God in worship.

He appears again upon his seat of majesty as a sovereign, in the glory of his infinite supremacy, and the soul sees him as the supreme of beings, owns his just sovereignty, and subjects itself afresh, and for ever to his high dominion. O with what deep humility and self-abasement doth the saint, considered merely as a creature, cast himself down at the foot of God, when he comes near to the seat of his majesty! "*Behold,* saith Abraham, *I now have taken upon me to speak unto thee, I who am but dust and ashes;*" Gen. xviii. 27. This is the language of a saint when got near to the seat of the majesty of God. "Before I had seen thee as such a sovereign, I was restive and stubborn: in times past I quarrelled with God because of difficult duties imposed upon me, and because of the difficult dispensations I was made to pass through; but now I behold God so infinitely my superior, that I can quarrel no more with any duty, or any difficulty; I submit to all his will: whatsoever he will have me be, that I am; whatsoever he bids me do, that I do; for it is fit he should be a sovereign, and I should be a subject. I give myself to him afresh, and for ever, that he may dispose of me according to his own will and for his own glory: I would be more regardless of myself, and more regardful of my God: it is fit he should be the ultimate end of all that I can be, and all that I can do, for he is my sovereign."

Again, when a soul is near to God, God appears in the glory of his holiness; for the seat of his majesty is called the throne of his holiness; *Psal.* xlvii. 8. And then the heavens are not clean in his sight: and the soul cries out with those worshipping seraphims, *Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory:* and joins with Isaiah, the worshipping saint, in that humble language, *woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips,* &c. You see the character of a saint getting near to God, and standing before the seat of his majesty; *Isaiah* vi. 3, 4. where the angels and the prophet worship together with the deepest humility. "I have heard of thy holiness before, says the soul, and I have heard before of thy glory afar off; but now *mine eyes see it, and I abhor myself in dust and ashes;* Job xlii. 6.

2. His seat is to be considered as a seat of judgment; for God is not only a king, but a judge: and Job has, without doubt, a reference to this in my text, because the language which he uses, seems suited to a throne of judicature, a throne of justice. "If I could get near his seat, I would order my cause before him, I would plead with him." The soul that gets near to God, sees him sitting upon a seat of judgment, as an omniscient God: he looks like the judge of all the earth, and his eyes are like a flame of fire to search our souls to the centre, and to know our most hidden thoughts: the soul then

attempts no more to conceal itself, no more to hide its guilt or its wretchedness; for it beholds those eyes of God that see through all things, that search into the deepest hypocrisy, and it is impossible that any thing should be concealed from him. "Behold I am before that God, says the soul, before whom nothing can be hid; before whom all things are naked and open; and it is with him that I have to do; therefore I open my heart before him, and I spread open all my inward powers, for he sees and knows them all, should I attempt to conceal them." "I behold him in his infinite and inflexible justice, as well as in his all-seeing knowledge; and I cry out, *If thou, O Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord who should stand?*" Psal. cxxx. 4. This is the language of the holiest saint getting near to God here on earth, as seated upon a seat of judgment.

The soul beholds him also as girt with resistless power to execute his own laws; and the thunder of his power, says Job, who can understand? xxvi. 14. He has armies of angels, ministers of fire, attendants on his tribunal, and swift to execute the sentence of his mouth. The saint sees him thus invested, thus surrounded, and adores and fears before him. The soul beholds him with rewards in one hand, and punishments in the other; infinite rewards, and infinite punishments; distributing to the unseen world perpetual blessedness, and perpetual pains. "I behold him arrayed in this glory, saith the saint, I expect my sentence from his lips, from whence eternal blessings, and eternal curses, are dispensed to all the regions of heaven and hell; but he will not plead against me with his great power; the sentence that comes forth from his mouth, I trust, shall be on my side."

3. He appears as sitting upon a throne of grace. The majesty and judgment that belong to his seat, do not forbid mercy to attend him; he sits upon a seat of mercy, and *there*, says Job, *the righteous might surely dispute with him;* xxiii. 7. and there I should be delivered from his terrors as an avenging God; there, though he judge me, yet he will plead my cause; for the same Judge that sits upon a throne of glory, has taken upon him to become my Advocate. "There I behold him, says the soul, with millions of pardons for vile transgressors, and with abundant favour for rebels; such a rebel am I, and such a transgressor, and yet there is pardon and grace for me. I behold there riches and raiment for the poor, the needy, and the naked, and help for the weak believer." There goodness appears in the face of God, in all the sweet variety of its divine forms. There appears long suffering for old sinners, and patience for repeated guilt, and pity for the miserable, and free grace for those that deserve nothing but vengeance. All this discovers itself in the face of God, to a soul that gets near him, even to his mercy-seat; and the soul bows, and wonders, and worships, and makes still nearer approaches, and receives the grace, and rejoices in the salvation.

The soul puts in for a share in this mercy with faith and hope, and will not be denied, will not be excluded; then he uses that holy boldness, that παῤῥησια, or liberty of speech; *Heb.* iv. 6. And this is the language of faith, when the soul gets near to God: "Since there are so many millions of pardons with thee for sinners, I will not go away without one; since there is such a righteousness as that of thine own Son to clothe the naked, I will not go away without being clothed with this righteousness; since there are such supplies of strength for the weak, I will not leave thy seat till I get some strength." The soul then wrestles and pleads, and makes supplication, as Jacob did when he came near to God; *Gen.* xxxii. 22. *I will not let thee go except thou bless me.* The soul

beholds in God mercy enough for the largest multitude of sinners, and pardons large enough for the blackest offences; it sees Paul the persecuter and blasphemer so near to the right-hand of God in glory, that it cries out with a joyful faith, "All the aggravations of my guilt shall no more divide me from the mercy-seat, shall no more prevent my hope and help in God; for there sits Paul the persecutor and blasphemer; and he was set forth as an example how full God is of mercy!" 1 *Tim.* i. 16. *I obtained mercy, that in me first Christ Jesus might shew all long suffering, for a pattern to believers.* This is the temper, this is the voice, and this is the language of a soul that gets near to God, even to his seat, considered as a seat of majesty, of judgment, and of grace.

I proceed now to the second sign or attendant of holy nearness to God in prayer.

II. When a soul comes near to God in prayer, there will generally be some sweet taste of the special love of God, and warm returns of love again to God from the soul. The soul that comes near to God is not satisfied merely with low degrees of faith and hope, with some feeble dependence, and some faint expectations of mercy; it can hardly leave God till it has an assurance. Faith and hope in the mercy of God, are different from that joy that arises from the immediate sensations of divine love. The Psalmist in the lxiii. *Psal.* ver. 1, 2, &c. seems to have a reference to both these particulars together, which I have already mentioned. *My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee—to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.* "I have seen thee in the sanctuary as sitting upon a throne of majesty, on a seat of judgment and of grace; I have seen thy power and thy glory there, and I have seen something more than this, I have tasted some special loving-kindness, and that loving-kindness is better than life, therefore my lips shall praise thee. I have had a sense of the special love of God shed abroad in my soul, I have known his love is exercised toward me, therefore my soul is full of praise." God will seldom let a soul that is got so near him by holy labour and fervency of spirit, go away merely with hope and dependence, without some sacred delight and joy.

A saint that has drawn near to God in worship, will tell you his own rich experience, and say, "When I found him whom my soul loveth, I was constrained to break forth into these sweet expressions, I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine; for I love him above all things, and my love is but the effect of his. In that blessed hour I felt, and I was assured of that mutual relation between God and me: I found so much of his image stamped on me, that I knew I was the Lord's: whence I rejoice in the full persuasion of his love. I know he loves me, for his sanctifying Spirit hath witnessed with my spirit, that I am one of his children; and I know that I love him, for my spirit witnesseth also as an echo to his Spirit, that I have chosen him for my Father, my Ruler, and my God, and have surrendered myself to him on his own terms; and I address him as my Father, with words of the choicest affection, and of most endeared sentiments of soul."

When a person in whom grace is wrought, gets so near to God, and sees this God in his own loveliness, and in his kindest perfections, there are some new divine passions kindled in the soul towards this God, towards this first beauty, towards this original of all perfection and goodness; and God will seldom let one come so near him, without shewing him the love of his heart; and the name of the devout worshipper graven, as it were, on the palms of his hands, or in the book of his mercy. He speaks to the soul

in his own divine language, "Son, or daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee. O man, thou art greatly beloved. I am your God, and you are my people. I have bought thee dear, and thou art mine. I have created thee, O Jacob; I have formed thee, O Israel; I have redeemed thee, O believer, and thou art for ever mine." And such discoveries of the love of God to the soul, draw out still more love from the soul towards God, and raise more sacred exercises of divine love in one hour, than a whole year of common devotions can do; and the saint learns more of this sacred sensation of the love of God, than years of cold and common devotions would teach him.

III. When the soul gets near to God in prayer, there will be a hatred of sin at the very thoughts of it, and holy meltings and mournings under the remembrance of its own sins. "How hateful does sin appear, will the soul say, now I am come so near to the seat of a holy God! Never did I see sin in so dark and so odious colours, as this hour reveals and discovers to me; never did I so sensibly behold the abomination that is in all sin, as now I do; I never saw it so contrary to all that is in God, to his holiness, to his glory, to his justice, and to his grace. O wretch that I am, that I should ever have indulged iniquity! that I should ever have borne with such an infinite evil in my heart! that I should ever take delight in such mischief against God! Now I hate and abhor myself because of sin. O that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night, because I have been such a sinner so long, and because I am so much a sinner still!" The heart of a saint that comes near to God, is pained at the memory of old sins; and together with a present sweetness of divine love, there is a sort of anguish at the thoughts of past iniquities. A present God will make past sins look dreadful and heinous; therefore it is that sin looks so little to us, and appears so light a thing, because we seldom get near to the seat of God, and bring our iniquities to that divine light.

It is a very common instance, and you all know it, that a blot or spot on a paper or garment, looks so much deeper, when the place you view it in is lighter; at noon-day, and in the eye of the sun, those smaller blemishes appear, which at other times are utterly unseen, and every greater spot, every fouler stain, looks most odious and disagreeable. Just thus it is with the soul, when it is displayed under the eye of the Sun of Righteousness; every blemish, every defilement appears, and the soul hates itself so far as it is sinful, while sin itself looks infinitely more odious. Therefore Job says, ix. 30. *Should I wash myself in snow-water, and make myself never so clean, thou wouldest plunge me in the ditch, and my own clothes would abhor me;* that is, "should I use all the methods of cleansing that are possible, and then enter into thy immediate presence, that light of thy presence would discover so many spots and defilements upon me, as if I had just plunged myself in a ditch, and my garments had been all over defiled."

This Sermon, if too long, may be divided here.

IV. At such a time there is a power and virtue enters into the soul, coming from a present God, to resist sin, and to oppose great temptation. "*I can do all things, if Christ be near to strengthen me,* says the apostle; *Phil.* iv. 13. When I was afflicted with the buffeting of Satan, says the same apostle; 2 *Cor.* xii. 8, 9. for this I applied myself to the mercy-seat, and I got near to the throne of grace; there I pleaded with my God, and I received this answer from him; *My grace is sufficient for thee;* then,

says he, I could glory in infirmities, and in persecutions for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong; when I feel my own weakness, and see almighty strength near me, and engaged on my side, then I grow strong in courage, and with success encounter my most powerful adversaries. I will not fear, says David, though thousands have set themselves together against me, if thou art with me, my strength and my rock: I will walk through the shadow of the valley of death, and fear no evil; *Psal.* xxiii. 4. for thou art with me." Divine courage and fortitude are increased abundantly by coming so near to the throne of God.

There is a zeal for God enters into the soul at such a season, and the soul is more desirous to lay out itself for the glory of God at such a time. Moses had drawn near to God in the mount, and had been with him forty days; when he came down from the mount, he beheld the people filled with idolatry, and he brake the tables of stone in an impatience of zeal; his zeal for God was so great, he hardly knew what he did; his zeal for God was kindled high, because he had been so near to God, and just conversing with him. So, *Isaiah* vi. 8. when that great saint had been near to God, and had seen him in the glories of his holiness, and had some courage and confidence in his love, "Now I will go, says he, upon any difficult message; Here am I, send me, though it be to fulfil the hardest service." There will be generally all these attendants of great nearness to God. *viz.* power against temptation, strength against sin, zeal for the glory of God in the world, and ability to perform difficult duties.

V. There will be a spiritual frame introduced into the heart, and a distance from all carnal things. "Stand by, saith the soul to all this world, whilst I go to seek my God; but when I have found him, then the world of itself, as to all the temporal concerns of it, vanishes and goes out of sight. When I get so near to heaven, this earth is so small a point, that it cannot be seen; and those comforts among the creatures, that were fair as the moon, or bright as the larger stars, are vanished and lost, and disappear under the brighter light of this Sun." Created beauties, with all their little glimmerings, tempt the soul toward them, when God is absent; as a twinkling candle entices the silly fly at midnight to hover about the rays of it; but the candle faints under the broad beams of rising day-light; it has no power to attract those little buzzing animals in the morning, and it is quite invisible at noon. So the very approach of God makes creatures appear more contemptible and worthless in the esteem of a devout christian; a God near at hand will drive the creatures afar off; and a present God will command the world to utter absence. None of the tempting vanities of life come in sight, and sometimes not the most important concerns of it remain before the eye of the saint, when God appears and fills the view and prospect of his spirit. The soul is taken up with spiritual things, therefore carnal ones vanish; it is entertained and filled with the majesty of God, the riches of grace, redeeming grace; with the glory of Christ Jesus, the beauty of his person, the honour of his characters, his various excellencies, and the super-eminence of his offices, both in the constitution and discharge of them; the soul is then warmed with a zealous concern for the church of Christ, and big with designs for the honour of God, while it forgets the world.

Or at such a season as this, when we get near to God in prayer, if we think of any of the creatures, it is all in order to the honour of God. If I think of a brother, or father, or child. "O may they all be instruments in thine hand, for thy honour here

among men, and for ever among blessed angels!" The soul does not ask for riches and glories on earth for them: but, "May they live in thy sight, O Lord!" If it thinks of the comforts of life, or the blessings of prosperity, "O let holiness to the Lord be written upon them all; for I would not have one of them, but what may subserve thine honour in the world." If the soul thinks of its pains, and sorrows, and reproaches, it longs for the sanctification of them at present, and the removal of them in due season, that it may serve its God the better. Thus the soul is, as it were, taken out of self, when it gets near to God.

"Let me have the conveniences of life (says the christian), not so much for my ease, as that I may better advance thine honour." The soul grows weaned from self at such a time; it breaks out of the narrow circle of self, when it gets nigh to God. If it thinks of the ministry or of ordinances, "Lord, let that ministry be for the advancement of thy name! Lord, let these ordinances be for the increase of thy glory in the world, for the advancement of grace in my heart, and bring me nearer to heaven! If it thinks of the kingdom, or the parliament, powers or princes in this world, it is with this design, that God may be glorified in the courts of princes, and in parliaments, and honoured in armies and nations known and unknown." Thus the soul always keeps within sight of God: it still keeps all its designs within the circle of God, and aims still at the glories of its heavenly Father. If it thinks of life or of death, "I would not ask life, says the saint, but to glorify thee: nor death, but to glorify thee better, and to enjoy more of thee." Thus when the soul is near to God, it is in a divine light that it sees all things, it is still with a design for God; and when it indulges the thoughts toward any creature, it is without turning aside a moment from its God. Thus carnal things are taken into the mind, and spiritualized by the presence of God, the infinite Spirit, when the soul approaches so near to his seat.

VI. There will then be a fixedness of heart in duty without wandering, and liveliness without tiring. At other times of common and usual worship, when the saint is in too formal and too cold a frame, the heart roves perpetually, and is soon weary; but when we get near to God, then we have a little emblem of heaven within us, where they worship God day and night without interruption, and without weariness. When we wait upon God at this rate, we are still mounting up higher and higher, as with eagles' wings; we walk first without fainting, and then run without wearying; at last, we fly as an eagle, and make haste to the fuller possession of our God; *Isaiah* xl. 31. The soul is then detained in the presence of God with overpowering delight, and it cannot be taken away from the object of its dearest satisfaction. This is a joy above all other joys, above all the joys of sense, above all the joys of the intellectual world that are not divine and holy. There are some pleasures that arise from philosophical and intellectual notions, that are superior to the pleasures of sense; but the pleasure of being near to God in devotion, far transcends all these. Animal nature, at such a season, may be worn out, and faint and die under it; but the mind is not weary. It is possible for divine transports to rise so high as to break this feeble frame of flesh, and dissolve it; and there have been instances of persons that have been near to a dissolution of mortality under the power of divine ecstasies; but the soul has not been faint, has felt no weariness.

There are at such a season most pleasurable thoughts of heaven; there are some bright glimpses of that blessed state when a christian attains this nearness to God; for heaven

is a state of nearness to God everlasting and uninterrupted; nor are the blessed inhabitants of that world ever weary of their company or their business; and thus, when there is any thing a-kin to heaven brought down to the saints in this mortal state, they know it cannot be uninterrupted and perpetual; and therefore there is a desire of frequent returns of such seasons as these are, while they are here on earth. And as Christ, the bridegroom, speaks to his saints in the language of Solomon, *Let me see thy face* often, *my spouse, my beloved, let me hear thy voice;* Song ii. 14. and viii. 13. So the saint says to his God at such a season, " O may I often see thy face in this manner, may I often hear such a voice as this is from thee, for I know not how to live without it. Flee, my beloved Saviour, and make haste to a speedy return, and let there be an uninterrupted and everlasting converse between God and my soul.

Lastly, There is at such a season oftentimes a pouring out of the soul before God with some freedom in the gift, as well as the grace of prayer. Mere sighs and groans are for persons at a distance; but when we get near to God, we speak to him even in his ear; and the heart is full, and the tongue overflows. I grant there may be the spirit of prayer assisting a poor soul that cannot get near to God, but still cries after him when he is hidden, and expresses itself only in sighs and in groans unutterable; so the apostle tells us; Rom. viii. 26. *The Spirit itself maketh intercession in us with groanings that cannot be uttered.* And thus it may be, while God hides himself; while there is a veil concealing God from our eyes, while there is any special temptation like a mountain that separates between God and our souls, he may send his Spirit to work us up to earnest desires and longings after him.

But when this SPIRIT OF PRAYER has brought the soul near, when God has been pleased to turn aside the veil, to remove the mountain, and to discover himself in all his glory, beauty, and love, then there will be generally the gift of prayer also in exercise by the assistance of the promised Spirit; and such persons many times are able to address themselves to God with much freedom, and to pour out the soul before God in proper words, notwithstanding at other times they appear to have but weak capacities. When they have such affecting sights of their own sin and guilt, and such surprising views of the mercy of God manifested to them in particular, and at the same time when they look upon all things round them with a design for the glory of God; they are both naturally and divinely taught to pour out their souls before God, and represent their cares and circumstances to him in affecting language.

I will not say indeed, it is always so when any soul gets near to God; there must be some allowance made for the different tempers and constitutions, as I shall shew immediately. There have also been some instances of holy men, whose voice has, at such a time, been overpowered with divine pleasure, all their powers have been transported and overwhelmed with rapturous silence; but for the most part holy souls have found an uncommon liberty of language at the throne of grace at such seasons. And this is one reason, I am persuaded, why the gift of prayer is not so common a thing as might be wished, because there is so little nearness to God among the professors of our day. The gift of prayer abounds not among christians in our churches; O that I could say it was found more gloriously among ministers, while in your name we speak to the great God! But if there were a constant laborious diligence in the soul to get nearer to God, in all our secret as well as public addresses to him, we

should find more abundance of the gift of prayer poured down upon us by the Spirit, as well as brighter evidences of every praying grace.

I must conclude this discourse before I proceed to the other heads which were proposed; but I would not willingly leave it without a caution or two, and one reflection.

The first caution is this: Let not the humble mourning christian, who walks carefully with God, under much darkness and fear, charge himself with utter distance and estrangement from the throne of grace, because he does not feel all these sacred passions and powers of nature in lively exercise, while he bows his knees before the Lord; for I have described this blessed privilege in the sublime glory and beauty of it, so as it has been often attained and enjoyed by persons eminent in grace and religion, and especially such as have had lively affections, and the powers of animal nature in a good degree sanctified, and subservient to the devotions of the soul. But where the natural spirits are low and sinking, and where temptations and darkness hang heavy upon the mind, the christian may truly draw near to God, so far as to find a gracious acceptance with him, and may fetch secret divine communications from the mercy-seat to maintain his spiritual life; though he feels but little of these sensations of heavenly pleasure, these more vigorous efforts of devotion and joy. Yet let him neither deny nor despise those more elevated enjoyments of soul, those near and blessed approaches to the seat of God, with which others have been favoured.

The second caution shall be addressed to those, who feel much of rapture and transport in their hours of secret piety. I intreat, that they would not imagine themselves so often to enjoy this unspeakable privilege of holy nearness to God in worship, if they do not sensibly find such an increase of holiness, as may prove effectually that they have been with God. If they have been conversing with their Maker, like Moses in the mount, there will be a shine of holiness upon the face of their souls. To pretend therefore to have enjoyed much of God in the closet, and to come down amongst men peevish and fretful, or immediately to betray a carnal and covetous, or a haughty and untractable spirit; these are things of so inconsistent a nature, that the succeeding iniquity spoils the devotion, and almost destroys the pretence to any sublime degrees of it. Such persons had need look well to themselves, and make a narrow search within, whether their hearts be sincere with God or no, lest they build all their hopes upon the flashy efforts of animal nature, coupled with the thoughts of some sacred objects, and tacked on to a divine meditation.

Reflection.—What a wretched hinderance is this world to our christian profit and pleasure! How often does it keep the soul at a sad distance from God! With what difficulty and uneasy reluctance are we sometimes drawn, or rather dragged into retirement, that the soul may seek after God there! How many excuses does the flesh borrow from the cares and necessities of this life, to delay, or to divert the duty of prayer? Our memory, our imagination, and our senses, are faithful purveyors and treasurers for the world; they are ever representing to us the things of this present state; the trifles or the businesses, the cares or amusements of it, the labours or delights which relate to this life; and thereby we are diverted and separated from God, and called away from him often, as soon as we begin to approach his presence.

What a pernicious enemy is this flesh to the soul, both in the pleasures and the pains of it! and this world, both in the flatteries and the frowns of it, and even in its necessary cares! When we would give our God the upper-room in our hearts, how

is this world ready to get the ascendant! How often does it break in upon our most sacred retirements, and thrust itself, with all its impertinencies, into our holy meditations! How often does it spread a carnal scene all over our thoughts at once, and spoil our devoutest hours! "I cannot dwell so long in my closet as I would, says a christian, the world has such importunate demands upon me." The world follows us, into our places of retirement; the exchange, or the shop, presses into the temple, and robs God even to his face.

Let us then have a care of the flesh; let us have a care of this world; we must be watchful over them as our most subtle and dangerous enemies, if we would keep our souls near to God, or often enjoy this divine privilege. Blessed Enoch! Who could walk with God in the midst of all the busy and vicious scenes of the old world! and he was translated to heaven, without calling at the gates of death, that he might give a glorious testimony to men how well God was pleased with him. Happy soul! that could keep near to God, and maintain a holy and humble converse with him, when all flesh had corrupted its way, and the earth was full of iniquity and violence? Blessed man, who knew not what it was to die, but he knew what it was to be near to God; and his faith and his devotion were changed the shortest way into sight and enjoyment! Happy spirit! who, without being absent at all from the body, was brought near to the seat of divine Majesty, and in the fullest manner present with the Lord!

HYMN FOR SERMON V.

THE SOUL DRAWING NEAR TO GOD IN PRAYER.

I.

MY God, I bow before thy feet,
When shall my soul get near thy seat?
When shall I see thy glorious face,
With mingled majesty and grace?

II.

How should I love thee, and adore,
With hopes and joys unknown before!
And bid this trifling world begone,
Nor teaze my heart so near thy throne!

III.

Creatures with all their charms should fly,
The presence of a God so nigh:
My darling sins should lose their name,
And grow my hatred, and my shame.

IV.

My soul shall pour out all her cares,
In flowing words, or flowing tears!
Thy smiles would ease my sharpest pain,
Nor should I seek my God in vain.

SERMON VI.

SINS AND SORROWS SPREAD BEFORE GOD.

JOB xxiii. 3, 4.

O THAT I KNEW WHERE I MIGHT FIND HIM! THAT I MIGHT COME EVEN TO HIS SEAT; I WOULD ORDER MY CAUSE BEFORE HIM, AND FILL MY MOUTH WITH ARGUMENTS.

THE SECOND PART.

THERE is such a thing as converse with God in prayer, and it is the life and pleasure of a pious soul: without it we are no christians: and he that practises it most, is the best follower of Christ: for our Lord spent much time in converse with his heavenly Father. This is balm that eases the most raging pains of the mind, when the wounded conscience comes to the mercy-seat, and finds pardon and peace there. This is the cordial that revives and exalts our natures, when the spirit, broken with sorrows, and almost fainting to death, draws near to the almighty Physician, and is healed and refreshed. The mercy-seat in heaven is our surest and sweetest refuge in every hour of distress and darkness on earth: This is our daily support and relief, while we are passing through a world of temptations and hardships in the way to the promised land. *It is good for us to draw near to God;* Psal. lxxiii. 28. And yet so much is human nature sunk down and fallen from God, that even his own children are ready to indulge a neglect of converse with him, if their souls are not always upon the watch. But let it be remembered here, that so much as we abate of this divine entertainment among the vanities or amusements of the world, the businesses or burdens of life; so much we lose of the glory and joy of religion, and deprive our souls of the comfort that God invites us to receive. Job was encompassed with sorrows all around, and his friends had censured him as a vile hypocrite, and a great sinner, because he was so terribly afflicted by the hand of God; whither should he run now but to his heavenly Father, and tell him of all his sufferings?

From the practice of this holy man, I thought we might have sufficient warrant to draw this inference, *viz.* That when a saint gets near to God in prayer, he tells him all his circumstances, and pleads for help. And that is the doctrine which I am endeavouring now to improve. "O if I could but come near him, even to his seat, I would order my cause before him: I would spread all my concerns before his eye, and I would plead with him for relief: I would fill my mouth with arguments."

Four things I proposed in the prosecution of this doctrine.

I. To consider what it is for a soul to get near to God in prayer.

II. What particular subjects doth a soul, thus brought near to the mercy-seat, converse with God about.

III. Why he chuses to tell all his circumstances and his sorrows to God, when he is thus near him.

IV. How he pleads for relief.

I. We have already considered, what it is for a soul to get near to the seat of God, and what are the usual attendants of such a privilege. At such a season the holy soul will have an awful and adoring sense of the majesty of God, a becoming fear of his terrors, and some sweeter taste of his love. There will be a divine hatred of every sin, and a sensible virtue and influence proceeding from a present God, to resist every temptation: there will be a spiritual and heavenly temper diffusing itself through the whole soul, and all the powers of it; a fixedness of heart without wandering, and a liveliness without tiring: no weariness is felt in the spirit at such a season, even though the flesh may be ready to faint under the overpowering sweetness: then the soul with freedom opens itself before the eye of God, and melts and flows in divine language, whether it complain or rejoice. But I have finished this head, and repeat no more.

II. What are some of the particular circumstances, or subjects of complaint, that a saint brings to God when he comes near him.

In general, a saint, when he is near to God, has all the fulness of his heart breaking out into holy language; he pours out his whole self before his God and his Father! all the infinite affairs that relate to the flesh and spirit, to this life, and that which is to come; all things in heaven, and all things in earth, created or uncreated, may, at one time or other, be the subjects of converse between God and a holy soul. When the question is asked by a carnal man, what can a christian talk with God so long and so often about? The christian in a divine frame, answers, "he hath matter enough for converse with God, to wear out time, and to fill up eternity." It may be as well asked on the other side, what has he not to say? what is there that relates to God, or to himself, to the upper, or the lower world, that he may not at some time say to his God?

But I must confine myself from wandering in so large a field, that I may comport with the design of my text. Though a good man, in devout prayer, often spreads his hopes and his joys before the Lord, as well as his sorrows, fears, and distresses; yet I shall at present endeavour to set forth only the mournful and complaining representations of his circumstances that he makes before the throne of God.

1. If I could but come near the mercy-seat, I would confess how great my sins are, and I would pray for pardoning grace. I would say, "How vile I am by nature;" I would count my original descent from Adam the great transgressor, and humble myself at the foot of a holy God, because I am the descendant of such a sinner.—I would tell him how much viler I have made myself by practice; "I have been an enemy in my mind by nature, and guilty of many wicked works, whereby I have farther estranged myself from him." I would tell my God how multiplied my transgressions have been before I knew him, and how aggravated they have been since I have been acquainted with him. I would acquaint him with the frequency of my returning guilt, how I have sinned against mercies, against reproofs, against warnings received often from his word, and often from his providence.

I may appeal to the souls of many present, whether they have not had the greatest freedom of confession of their sins, when they have been nearest to God, even though he be a God of holiness. At other times, they have not only been averse to confess to any friend, but even unwilling to talk over to themselves the aggravation of their iniquities, or to mention them in prayer: but when they are brought thus near the throne of God, they unbosom themselves before him, they pour out their sins and their tears together, with a sweet and mournful satisfaction. "I behold," says the saint, "the great atone-

ment, the blood of Jesus, and therefore I may venture to confess my great iniquities, for the satisfaction is equal to them all. When I behold God upon his seat, I behold the *Lamb in the midst of the throne as it had been slain*, and he is my Peace-maker. I see his all-sufficient sacrifice, his atoning blood, his perfect, his justifying righteousness." The soul then answers the call of God with great readiness, when God says in *Isaiah* i. 18. *Come, let us reason together; though your sins have been as scarlet, they shall be as wool.* " I am ready," says the soul, " to enter into such reasonings; I am ready to confess before thee, that my sins are all crimson and scarlet, but there is cleansing blood with thy Son: blood that has washed the garments of a thousand sinners, and made them white as snow; and it has the same virtue still to wash mine too: I trust in it, and rejoice when I behold that blood sprinkled upon the mercy-seat, and therefore I grow confident in hope, and draw yet nearer to God, a reconciled God, since his throne has the memorials of a bleeding sacrifice upon it."

2. If I could get near the seat of God, I would tell him how many my enemies are, and how strong; how malicious, and how full of rage.—And I would beg strength against them, and victory over them.—I would say as David; *Many there be that hate me, many there be that rise up against me; and many there be that say of my soul, there is no help for him in God; but thou, O God, art my glory, my shield, and the lifter up of my head;* Psal. iii. 1, 2, 3. Then, says the soul, I would complain to God of all my indwelling corruption, of the body of death that dwells in me, or in which I dwell; and say, " O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" I would tell him then of the secret working of pride in my heart, though I long to be humble; of the rising of ambition in my soul, though I would willingly maintain a middle state amongst men, and not aim and aspire to be great. I would acquaint him of the vanity of my own mind, though I am perpetually endeavouring to subdue it. I would tell him, with tears, of my sinful passions, of my anger and impatience, and the workings of envy and revenge in me; of the perpetual stirrings of disorderly appetites, whereby I am led away from my God: I would tell him of the hardness of my heart, and the obstinacy of my temper. I would open before his eye, all the vices of my constitution; all those secret seeds of iniquity that are ever budding and blossoming to bring forth fruit to death. These things are fit to mourn before the Lord, when the soul is come near to his seat.

I would complain of this sore enemy, the world, that is perpetually besetting me, that strikes upon all my senses, that by the ears, and the eyes, and all the outward faculties, draws my heart away from God my best friend. I would tell him of the rage of Satan, that watchful and malicious adversary; that I cannot engage in any duty of worship, but he is ready to throw in some foolish or vain suggestion to divert me; and I would look forward, and point to my last enemy death, and beg the presence of my God with me, when I walk through that dark valley: " Lord, when I enter into that conflict, assist me, that I may fear no evil, but be made more than a conqueror through him that has loved me."

3. I would tell him what darkness I labour under, either in respect of faith or practice. If I am perplexed in my mind, and entangled about any of the doctrines of the gospel, I would then tell my God what my entanglements are, where the difficulty lies: and I would beg, that by his Spirit and his word, he would solve the controversy, and set his own truth before me in his own divine light. And then in point of practice, what darkness lies upon the spirit at such a time, is revealed before God: " My way is

hedged up, I know not what path to chuse; it is very hard for me to find out duty; shew me, O Lord, the way wherein I should walk, and mark out my path plain for me."

4. I would mourn, and tell him, how little converse I have with himself, how much he is hidden from me: I would complain to him, how far off I am from him the most part of my life, how few are the hours of my communion with him, how short is the visit, how much his face is concealed from me, and how far my heart is divided from him. A soul then says, "Surely there is too great a distance between me and my God, my heavenly Father;" and cries out with bitterness, *Why is God so far from me, and why is my heart so far from God?* How often do I wait upon him in his own sanctuary, and among his saints, but I am not favoured with the sight *of his power and glory* there! And how often do I seek him in my secret retirements, but I find him not! I would tell him how often I read his promises in the gospel, and taste no sweetness; I go frequently to those wells of consolation, and they seem to be dry; then *I turn my face, and go away ashamed.*

5. I would tell him too of my temporal troubles, if I got near to God, because they unfit me for his service, they make me incapable of honouring him in the world, and render me unfit for enjoying him in his ordinances: I would tell him how they damp my zeal, how they bow my spirit down, and *make me go mourning all the day long*, to the dishonour of christianity, which is a dispensation of grace and joy. Thus I might complain before God of pains, of weakness, of sickness, of the disorders of my flesh; I might complain there too of the weakness of all my powers, the want of memory, the scatterings and confusions that are upon my thoughts, the wanderings of my fancy, and the unhappy influence that a feeble and diseased body has upon the mind: "O my God, how am I divided from thee, by dwelling in such a tabernacle! still patching up a tottering cottage, and wasting my best hours in a painful attendance on the infirmities of the flesh!"

I might then take the liberty of spreading before my God, all the sorrows and vexations of life, that unhinge my soul from its centre, and throw it off from my guard, and hurry and expose me to daily temptations. I might complain of my reproaches from friends and enemies; because these, many times, wear out the spirit, and unfit it for acts of lively worship. These are my weekly sorrows and groans, these are my daily fears and troubles; and these shall be spread before the eyes of my God, in the happy hour when I get near him.

Lastly, I would not go away without a word of pity and complaint concerning my relations, my friends, and acquaintance, that are afar off from God. I would put in one word of petition for them that are careless and unconcerned for themselves: I would weep a little at the seat of God for them: I would leave a tear or two at the throne of mercy, for my dearest relatives in the flesh, for children, brothers or sisters, that they might be brought near to God, in the bonds of the spirit. Then would I remember my friends in Christ, my brethren and kindred in the gospel; such as labour under heavy burdens, languish under various infirmities of life, or groan under the power of strong temptations. When God indulges me the favour of his ear, I would spread their wants and sorrows before him, together with my own, and make supplication for all the saints. I would leave a petition at the mercy-seat for my native country, that

knowledge and holiness may overspread the nation: that our king may be a nursing father to the church, and our princes may be blessings to the land. And while I send up my request for the British islands, I would breathe out many a sigh for Zion, that she may be the joy of the whole earth. I proceed now to,

III. The third head of enquiry, which is this; why does a saint, when he gets near to God, delight to tell him all his circumstances, and all his sorrows?

In general I might say this, because it is so seldom, at least in our day, that a saint gets very near to God; therefore, when he finds that happy minute, he says to his God all that he wants to say; he tells him all his heart, he pours out all his wants before him; because these seasons are very few. It is but here and there an extraordinary christian, who maintains constant nearness to God: the best complain of too much distance and estrangement. But to descend to particulars:

1. He is our chief friend, and it is an ease to the soul to vent itself in the bosom of a friend, when we are in his company. More especially as it was in the case of Job, when other friends failed him when he had begun to tell them some of his sorrows, and withal maintained his own integrity; they would not believe him, but became his troublers instead of his comforters: *My friends scorn me*, says Job, *chap.* xvi. 20. *but mine eye poureth out tears unto God.* I go to my best friend, my friend in heaven, when my friends here on earth neglect me.

Man is a sociable creature, and our joys and our sorrows are made to be communicated, that thereby we may double the one, and alleviate the other. There is scarce any piece of human nature, be it never so stupid, but feels some satisfaction in the pleasure of a friend, in communicating the troubles and the pleasures that it feels; but those that have God for their highest and best friend, they love to be often exercising such acts of friendship with him; and rather with him than with any friend besides, rather with him than with all besides him. This is the noblest and highest friendship; all condescension and compassion on the one side, and all infirmity and dependence on the other, and yet both joined in mutual satisfaction. Amazing grace of God to man! The christian rejoices in this admirable divine indulgence, and delights in all opportunities to employ and improve it.

Besides, this is the way to maintain the vigour of piety, and keep all the springs of divine love ever opening and flowing in his own heart; therefore he makes many a visit to the mercy-seat, and takes occasion from every troublesome occurrence in life, to betake himself to his knees, and improves every sorrow he meets on earth, to increase his acquaintance with heaven. He delights to talk all his grievances over with his God. Hannah, the mother of Samuel, is a blessed example of this practice; 1 *Sam.* i. 10. When she was in bitterness of soul, by reason of a sore affliction, and the teazing humour of her rival, she prayed to the Lord, and wept sore; and when she had left her sorrows at the mercy-seat, she went away, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad; *ver.* 18. So saith the christian, "I commit my sorrows to my God; he is my best friend, and I go away, and am no more sad: I have poured out my cares into his ear, and cast my burdens upon him, and leave them there in peace."

2. The saint knows God will understand him right, and will judge right concerning his case and his meaning. Though the expressions, it may be, are very imperfect, below the common language of men, and propriety of speech, yet God knows the meaning of the soul; for it is his own spirit that breathes in that soul, and he *knows*

the mind of his Spirit; Rom. viii. 27. The friends of Job perverted his sense: therefore, he turns aside to God, for he knows God would understand him. It is a very great advantage, when we spread our concerns before another person, to be well assured that person will take us right, will take in our meaning fully, and judge aright concerning our cause. Now we may be assured of this, when we speak to our God: he *knows our thoughts afar off*, and all circumstances, better infinitely than we can tell him. These our poor imperfect expressions of our wants, shall be no hinderances to his full supplies, nor any bar to his exercise of friendship towards us.

3. A saint pours out his soul before God, because he is sure of secrecy there. How many things are there transacted between God and a holy soul, that relate to guilt and inward workings of iniquity, that he could never publish to the world! and many things also that concern his conduct in life, his embarrassments of spirit, his difficulties, his follies, or the obstinacy, guilt, or follies of his friends or relatives, which prudence and shame forbid him to tell his fellow-creatures; and yet he wants to spread them all before God his best friend, God his dearest relative, the friend nearest to his heart. There may be many circumstances and cases in life, especially in the spiritual life, which one christian could hardly communicate to another, though under the strictest bonds and ties of natural, and civil, and sacred relation: But we may communicate these very affairs, these secret concerns with our God, and unburden our souls of every care, without the least public notice.

We cannot be perfectly secure of this with regard to any creature; for when we have experienced the faithfulness of a friend many years, he may possibly be at last unfaithful: Unfaithfulness is mingled with our nature since the fall, and it is impossible any person can be infallibly secure from it; *Psal.* lxii. 9. *Men of low degree are vanity, and great men are a lie:* but we may leave our case with our God, as secure as though we had communicated it to none: Nay, we may be easily secure and free in speaking, because God knows all before hand. Our complaint adds nothing to his knowledge, although it eases our souls, and gives us sweet satisfaction in having such a friend to speak to.

4. A saint believes the equity, faithfulness, and the love of God; therefore he spreads his case before him. His equity, that *the Judge of all the earth will do right; the righteous may plead with him.* His faithfulness, that he will fulfil all his promises: and his love, that he will take compassion on those who are afflicted; he will be tender to those who are miserable. David takes occasion from this, to address God under his sufferings and sorrows; *Psal.* lxii. 1, 2. *He is my rock, and my salvation, and my defence, I shall not be moved; therefore my soul waits upon God; my refuge is in him.* lxv. 1, 2. *He is a God that hears prayer, therefore unto him shall all flesh come.* God will not account our complaints troublesome, though they be never so often repeated; whereas men are quickly wearied with the importunities of those who are poor and needy. Great men are ready to shut their doors against those who come too often for relief; but God delights to hear often from his people, and to have them ask continually at his door for mercy. Though he has Almighty power with him, saith Job, *yet he will not plead against me with his great power: No, but he would put strength in me;* he would teach me how I should answer him; how I should answer his justice by appeals to his mercy; and how I should speak prevailingly before him.

5. *Lastly,* A saint tells God all his circumstances and sorrows, at such a season, be-

cause de hopes for relief from him, and from him only; for it is impossible creatures can give relief under any trouble, unless God makes them instruments of relief. And there are some troubles in which creatures cannot be our helpers, but our help must come only from God, and that in a more immediate way. Whatsoever be our distress, whether it arise from past guilt, and the torments of an anxious and troubled conscience; or whether it arise from the working of in-dwelling sin, the strength of temptation, or the violence of temporal afflictions, still God is able and willing to give relief. *Call upon me*, saith the Lord, *in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me;* Psal. l. 15. *And he hath never said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye my face in vain;* Isaiah xlv. 19.

IV. The fourth general head of discourse which I proposed, is to shew, How a saint, near the mercy-seat, pleads with God for relief.

Holy Job tells us in this text, that if he was got near to the seat of God, *he would fill his mouth with arguments.* Not as though he would inform God of the necessity, or the justice of his cause, beyond what he knew before; no, this is impossible: *He that teacheth man all things, shall he not know?* Psal. xciv. 9, 10. He who orders all the circumstances of our lives, and every stroke of his own rod, can he be unacquainted with any thing that relates to our sorrows? Nor can we use arguments with God to awaken his ear, or move his compassion, as though he had neglected us, or forgotten our distress; for *all things are* for ever *naked and open* before *the eyes of him with whom we have to do.* Heb. iv. 13. The Shepherd of Israel cannot slumber, nor does his mercy want our awakenings.

But in this sort of expressions, the great God condescends to talk, and to transact affairs with us, and permits us to treat him in a way suited to our weakness: He would have us plead and argue with him, that we may shew how deep a sense we have of our own wants, and how entirely we depend on his mercy. Since we cannot converse with him in a way equal to his own majesty and godhead, he stoops to talk with us in such a way as is most agreeable to our state, and most easy to our apprehension: He speaks such language as we can understand, and invites us to humble conference with him in the same way. *Come*, says God to his people, by Isaiah his prophet, *Come now, and let us reason together;* Isaiah i. 18. And he often, in holy scripture, represents himself as moved and influenced by the prayers and pleadings of his afflicted saints; and he has ordained, before hand, that the day *when he prepares their hearts to pray*, shall be the day when his *ear shall hear the desire of the humble*, and shall be the season of their deliverance; *Psal.* x. 17.

If you enquire, how a christian pleads with his God, and whence does he borrow his arguments? I answer, that according to the various sorrows and difficulties which attend him, so various may his pleadings be for the removal of them. There is not a circumstance which belongs to his affliction, but he may draw some argument from it to plead for mercy; there is not one attribute of the divine nature, but he may use it with holy skill, and thereby plead for grace; there is not one relation in which God stands to his people, nor one promise of his covenant, but may at some time or other, afford an argument in prayer. But the strongest and sweetest argument that a christian knows, is the name and mediation of Jesus Christ his Lord. It is for the sake of Christ, who has purchased all the blessings of the covenant, that a saint hopes to receive them; and for the sake of Christ, he pleads that God would bestow them.

But having treated largely on this subject, in my discourse, intitled, *A Guide to Prayer*, I shall not repeat the same things here, but refer the reader to the first chapter of that book, section 5.—It remains that I make a few useful reflections on the whole foregoing discourse.

Reflection I. What a dull and uncomfortable thing is religion, without drawing near to God! for this is the very business for which religion is designed; the end and aim of religion is getting nigh to God; if it attain not this end, it is nothing.

O the madness of hypocrites, who satisfy themselves to toil in long forms of worship, and appear perpetually in the shape of religion, but unconcerned whether they ever get near to God by it or no! They lose the end and design for which religion was made. What if we know all the doctrines of the gospel; what if we can talk rationally about natural religion; what if we can deduce one truth from another, so as to spread a whole scheme of godliness before the eyes or ears of those we converse with; what if we can prove all the points of christianity, and give incontestable arguments for the belief of them; yet we have no religion, if our souls never get near to God by them. A saint thinks it a very melancholy thing when he is at a distance from God, and cannot tell God his wants and sorrows. Though he be never so much studied in divinity, and the deep things of God, yet if God be not with him, if he does not come near to his mercy-seat, so as to converse with him as his friend, the soul is concerned and grieved, and never rests till this distance be removed. It is to little purpose that we get into churches, join in the fellowship of the gospel, and attend many seasons of prayer: It is to very little purpose to read chapters, and to hear sermons, one day after another: It is to little purpose all these forms are maintained, if we have not the substance and power of godliness? if our God be not *near us*, if we never *get near to God*.

Reflection II. How happy are we under the gospel, above all ages and nations besides us, and before us! For we have advantages of getting near to God, beyond what any other religion has; above what the heathen world ever enjoyed; for their light of nature could never shew them the throne of grace: above what the ancient patriarchs had, though God came down in visible shapes, and revealed and discovered himself to them as a man or an angel: above what the Jews had, though God dwelt among them in visible glory, in the holy of holies. The people were kept at a distance, and the high-priests were to come thither but once a year; and their veil, and smokes, and shadows, did, as it were, conceal God from them, although they were types of a future Messiah; and even their *shekinah* itself, or cloud of glory, gave them no spiritual idea or notion of godhead, though it was a shining emblem of God dwelling among them.

We have better ordinances, and brighter mediums of converse with God; we have more powerful assistances to raise us heavenward; we have the Messiah, the Emmanuel; that is, *God in flesh*, God come near us that we may get near to him; we have the *promise of the Spirit*, which is one of the glorious privileges of the gospel; *Eph.* ii. 13, 18. *Ye who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh through the blood of Christ; and through him have we access by one Spirit to the Father.* Through Christ Jesus, and the purchase of his blood, and the working of his Spirit, we approach to the Father, we are brought near to God.

And this very method, *viz.* the atonement of the blood of Christ, and the work-

ing of the Spirit by which we are brought near to God in our first conversion, are the ways by which we must draw near him in duty ever afterward: it is by the same atonement, and by the same Spirit. We are continually contracting fresh guilt, and were it not for the perpetuity of the virtue of that sacrifice, our guilt would be an irremovable bar against our coming near to God daily and hourly; and after every new sin, were it not for that Spirit, we could never get near to God again: but that Spirit is promised *to abide with us;* John xiv. 16. and in *Heb.* iv. 14, 16. *Christ is passed into the heavens,* is very near to God, and hath shewn us the way thither; Heb. x. 19, 20. *Having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.*

O how should we value our acquaintance with Christ, and pray earnestly for his Spirit! one makes a way for our coming near to God, and the other actually brings us near. How glorious would churches be, if there were more of this Spirit poured down upon us! When an assembly of saints, all joining together in one act of worship, shall at once rise by the same Spirit, and approach to the mercy-seat, and order their cause before God; what might not such a worshipping assembly obtain at the hands of God? What beauty would appear in the worship of christians then? What glory would be found in a society of saints, if this Spirit were but there? Christianity has had these ornaments, and these honours: let us pray that God would restore them again.

Reflection III. This doctrine will not suffer us to confine ourselves or others, merely to a set prescribed form of words in prayer. For as the cases and concerns of soul or body, which we spread before God, are almost infinitely various, so must we express those cases and concerns before God in proper words, and plead for relief with a variety of arguments, as the Spirit of God shall assist us: *I would order my own cause before him,* says Job, *and my mouth should be filled with arguments.* It is not possible that a Prayer Book should be drawn up with forms particularly suited to every complaint, and every sorrow, that a holy soul wants to pour out, and spread before the mercy-seat. And the christian, that knows the pleasure of getting near to God in prayer, cannot content himself to wrap up all his special and dearest concernments in a few general sentences.

"What! when I am brought so nigh to my God, my Almighty and compassionate friend, when I am taken as it were by the hand, and led into his secret place; when I have the ear of God so near me, shall I not tell him my secret and particular grievances? When I feel such a sweet freedom of soul in his presence, shall I not unbosom my whole self to him? Shall I check the devout appetites and affections of my heart, because I do not find words in my Prayer Book fit to express them? Shall I quench the blessed Spirit thus, and limit my converse with God?"

I allow forms of prayer well composed, to be useful helps for younger or meaner christians; or, indeed, for all persons, when the spirits are low and languishing, and the heart in a heavy or cold temper: But at such a glorious season to confine a holy soul to a few good expressions, written down before, how great an injury would it be to its divine pleasure and profit?

Reflection IV. How comfortable a consideration may be drawn from my discourse, by those that have never a friend upon earth, that there is a friend in heaven, to whom they may tell all their circumstances, and all their sorrows! There are some persons, in this world, so mean and so wretched, that they are ready to think, at least, that they have never a friend, and are apt to complain that they are altogether friendless. But

there is a God, one that they may be sure is their everlasting friend, when they are willing to enter into a state of friendship with him: when they have commenced friendship with him by the blood of Jesus the great Reconciler, and by the working of the reconciling Spirit; then let them improve this consideration with sweet joy. They have a friend in heaven, before whom they can spread all their sorrows, though they be friendless on earth; though they are forced to say of their souls, "There is no refuge for them in the world," yet they can say, *God is their refuge:* They can express to him their various sufferings, and their several difficulties, and they can be sure of a helper in heaven.

Reflection V. *Lastly*, That future state of glory must be blessed indeed, where we shall be ever near to God, even to his seat, and have no sorrows to tell him of. If it be so delightful a thing to come near the seat of God here upon earth, to mourn before him, and to tell him all our circumstances, and all our sorrows; how pleasurable a blessedness must that of heaven be, where we shall be ever rejoicing before him, as Christ Jesus was before the world was made, *rejoicing daily before him;* and our *delight* shall be with that God who created *the sons of men;* Where we shall be for ever telling him our joys, and our pleasures, with humble adoration of his grace, and everlasting gratitude. It will be a sweet redoubling of all the delights and enjoyments of heaven, to tell him, in the language of that world, what infinite satisfaction we feel in his society; what enjoyments and delights we derive from his immediate influences; how full our hearts are of love to him, and how full they are of the sense of his love: There his love communicated to us, shall be, as it were, reflected back again from our souls to God; and in the perpetual communications and reflections of knowledge, joy, and love shall our heaven consist.

O that I could raise your souls, and mine, to blessed breathings after this felicity, by such representations! But how infinitely short must the brightest descriptions fall of this state and place: May you and I, who speak and hear this, may every soul of us be made thus happy one day, and learn the extent and glory of this blessedness, by sweet and everlasting experience. *Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMON VI.

SINS AND SORROWS SPREAD BEFORE GOD.

I.

O THAT I knew the secret place,
Where I might find my God!
I'd spread my wants before his face,
And pour my woes abroad.

II.

I'd tell him how my sins arise,
What sorrows I sustain:
How grace decays, and comfort dies,
And leaves my heart in pain.

III.

I'd say, "How flesh and sense rebel!
What inward foes combine
With the vain world, and powers of hell,
To vex this soul of mine!"

IV.

He knows what arguments I'd take,
To wrestle with my God;
I'd plead for his own mercy's sake,
And for my Saviour's blood.

V.

My God will pity my complaints,
And heal my broken bones:
He takes the meaning of his saints,
The language of their groans.

VI.

Arise, my soul, from deep distress,
And banish every fear;
He calls thee to his throne of grace,
To spread thy sorrows there.

SERMON VII.

A HOPEFUL YOUTH FALLING SHORT OF HEAVEN.

MARK X. 21.

THEN JESUS, BEHOLDING HIM, LOVED HIM.

THE FIRST PART.

IF we would know the person who was favoured with the love of Jesus, and be acquainted with his character, it is necessary to read the whole narrative, as we find it delivered in this chapter, from the 17th to the 23d verse.

And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? 18. *And Jesus said unto him, why callest thou me good, there is none good save one, that is God.* 19. *Thou knowest the commandments; do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, do not bear false witness, defraud not, honour thy father and mother.* 20. *And he answered, and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.* 21. *Then Jesus beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, one thing thou lackest, go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come take up the cross, and follow me.* 22. *And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved; for he had great possessions.* 23. *And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!*

Now if we consult and compare the account which the other evangelists give us of this transaction, we shall find that the person was a *young man;* Matt. xix. 20. and a *ruler among the Jews;* Luke xviii. 18. He had some concern upon his mind about his future state, and came to Christ, as to a divine prophet, to enquire the way to heaven: But it is evident he had a vain conceit of his own righteousness, and at the same time he had an excessive love to money; he would fain have been an heir of heaven, but he valued his inheritance on earth much more: He wished for the love of God, but would enjoy and love this world too; and rather than renounce the pleasant things of this life, he would quit his pretences to a life to come; for he went away grieved and full of sadness, at the direction which our Saviour gave him, and would not venture the experiment. He forsook Christ and heaven, having great possessions on earth.

It is not necessary to our purpose, to know whether, in the following years of his life, he was brought to repentance and salvation, though it is most likely that he never was; for if he loved his estate and his money, so well in his younger years, that vice probably increased with his age. Besides, he stands in the history of the gospel, as an example of those men, who lose heaven for the love of money. But howsoever it might be afterward, this is certain, that at that time he was in a state of sin and death; which is sufficient to my present design.

From the words of my text, set in this light, and compared with the issue of the whole conversation between Christ and this young man, we may derive this doctrine:

Doct. Our Saviour had some love for a person that preferred this world to heaven, and neglected his salvation.

In order to improve this thought we shall consider,

I. What is meant by the love of our Saviour to this young man, and to persons of his character.

II. What was there in him that might attract our Saviour's love.

III. What remarks may be made upon the sin and folly of a person so lovely, and so beloved of Christ.

IV. Make an address to three sorts of persons, taking the occasion from the character of the person in my text.

First, What is meant by the love of our Saviour to this young man, and how far may he be said to love a person who is void of true grace, and neglects salvation.

Here, I conceive, we are not to look upon our Lord Jesus Christ as acting according to his divinity, but only in his human nature; for it is evident that Christ considered as God, loved him not in that sense in which the love of God is usually taken; for he had plain evidences of a worldly covetous mind, and so could not be the object of special divine complacency: Nor do we find that Christ loved him so well, as to communicate divine grace and salvation to him.

I confess there may be some sort of love attributed to God, with relation to creatures of any kind which have any thing valuable in them: So God loves all the works of his hands; so he loves the heavens and the earth, and all the pieces of inanimate nature: that is, he approves his own workmanship, the effects of his own wisdom and power. God is also sometimes said to love those to whom he communicates temporal blessings, or makes the offer of eternal ones. So he loved the whole nation of the Jews, though he did not give all of them his saving grace. But still it is much more natural to expound the words of my text concerning Christ as man; for there were some peculiar qualities in this youth, which were suited to attract the love of human nature; such qualities as a wise and perfect man could not but love: It was some such sort of love as our Lord expressed toward the apostle John, in a way of distinction from the rest; upon which account, probably, he was called, *the disciple whom Jesus loved;* John xiii. 23. Therefore I conceive Christ is here represented as exerting the innocent and kind affections of human nature towards a youth so agreeable and hopeful.

Now this love implies in it these five things:

1. A hearty approbation of those good qualities which Christ beheld in him: For he, being perfect and wise, cannot but approve that which is excellent. He had a sharp eye, and great sagacity of nature: With a ready penetration he could discern what was valuable; and must necessarily have a just esteem for every thing wherein his Father's wisdom and power did eminently appear. Whatsoever God created at first, was good; *Gen.* i. 31. And whatsoever remains of that good workmanship of God, Christ, the Son of God, approved still, so far as it was untainted with sin, and considered in itself, abstracted from the criminal qualities that might attend it.

2. This love of Christ to the young man, implies a complacency in his person; a sort of human delight in a fellow-creature that had several excellent properties; though the

love of God, and powerful religion, were wanting. If I read a book that has much good sense in it, and where the reasonings are well connected, I cannot but have a delight in reading, though the subject itself may be trifling, or the theme disagreeable. If I hear an oration well composed, with many ingenious turns of thought and pathetic expressions; and all these pronounced with the various decencies of speech and gesture, I take pleasure in the performance, and may love the orator, though he insist upon sentiments quite contrary to my own. So I may be pleased with the learned conversation of a knowing and well-tempered man, and love him so far, though he may be my enemy, and perhaps, in his heart, an enemy to God too; for such was this young man, an idolater of gold, and therefore an enemy to God; *Jam.* iv. 4. concerning whom it is written, that *Jesus loved him.*

3. Some natural good wishes for his welfare are implied in this love. There is in every wise and good man, a hearty desire of the happiness of his fellow-creatures, he loves them all in this sense, even the foolish and the wicked. Human nature that has any goodness in it, is ready to wish well to any person, though he be an utter stranger, and unknown; especially if he has some agreeable qualities. There may be an innocent inclination to see all men happy, though we know this shall not be brought to pass; for the word of God declares that most part of men walk in the broad way, and shall go down to hell. You know how passionately St. Paul longed for the salvation of all his country-men the Jews. This is called a love of benevolence; and it is evident by the following particulars, that the Lord expressed this good will towards the young man in my text.

4. A conferring of actual benefit or kindness, is implied in the love of Christ toward this youth; for he stood still and entertained him with friendly discourse: He endeavoured by proper methods to convince him of sin; he gave him directions what he should do to obtain treasure in heaven; he called him to be his disciple and follower; and gave him a promise of everlasting riches, if he would have complied with his proposal. This is called a love of benificence: And this our Lord Jesus practised abundantly, even to those whom he did not savingly enlighten and convert by his gospel; for it was his character, that he went about doing good; *Acts* x. 38.

5. This love of Christ includes in it compassion for the young man, and some degree of sorrow to think that he should miss of heaven; that he should be so hardened in self-confidence, so puffed up with a conceit of his own righteousness, and so hard to be convinced of his weakness and guilt, as to stand to it boldly, that he had kept all the commandments of God: and at last, that he should be so entangled with a love to money, as to despise the treasures of heaven, and to let Christ and salvation go.

Such a mournful pity did our Lord express to Jerusalem, in the days of his flesh; O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee: how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!* Luke xiii. 34. And he mingled the tears of love and sorrow when he came near the gates: for the same evangelist tells us, that *he beheld the city and wept over it,* with this melting language, *If thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes;* Luke xix. 41, 42.

When we behold a noble palace, a well-contrived garden, a piece of painting of uncommon art: "It is a pity, we cry, that such a building should be reduced to ashes,

such a garden overspread with desolation and disorder, or such a picture be all defaced." We have a sort of pity for these inanimate beauties, and we are ready to mourn their danger or ruin. And the passion is innocent and becoming: but the grief and the love rise higher still, when we see a living soul, a fellow-creature of our own rank, a man or woman dressed in agreeable accomplishments, and yet making haste to wilful destruction. Such love and such grief are comely for a wise and good man, and they became our Saviour well. Blessed Saviour! that ever thy love should lay itself out on such objects, as would awaken thy grief, and give thee so painful a compassion! But this was only in the days of his flesh! he pities mankind now under their various wretchedness and folly, yet we cannot suppose his present exaltation and blessedness does indulge real sorrow, or admit any smarting affliction; though in his humble state on earth, his human love expressed itself agreeably in such mournful compassion and tenderness.

II. We come to consider, what there was in this person that might attract our Saviour's love.

1. He had probably some natural qualifications which were agreeable and pleasing. His youth is expressed; *Matt.* xix. 20. A young man, in the prime of his days, in the force and flower of his age, the beauty and vigour of his nature: and it is very likely, that he might be of a comely figure and ingenuous countenance; for it is said, our Saviour beholding him, loved him. He fixed his eyes, and probably saw something in him delightful in his very aspect and appearance, which might partly induce him to those various expressions of love before mentioned, and to pity so lovely a youth, who was enslaved to riches, and bound to destruction in fetters of gold.

2. He had a courteous and obliging carriage, which appears in several instances; *viz.* he kneeled before our Lord, and paid him great respect with the gesture of his body; he saluted him, good Master! which our Lord did not reprove, when he said, there is none good but God; but put him to the trial, whether he would own him to be God or no. He acknowledged Christ as his superior, though he was so much a stranger to him, and so much a poorer man than himself. By his whole deportment we find him a person of great civility; he knew how to pay the honours of his country well, to give titles to whom titles are due, and to do these things gracefully. A courteous, humble, and decent behaviour, without affectation or flattery, is so far from being reproved by Christ, that not only, in this place, our Lord seems to be pleased with it, but in many places of the New Testament, it is recommended to make christianity amiable: it is pleasing to human nature, and cannot but gain love and esteem with all wise and virtuous persons.

3. He was religiously educated even from his childhood, and had grown up in sobriety, perhaps, from his very cradle; for he was but a young man when he came to our Lord, and yet he says, concerning the commandments of moral duty, I have kept them all from my youth. He sprung surely from good parents; he had such instructions from them, and they such a jealous and watchful eye over him, that he was kept from gross sins, and was brought up in all the forms of godliness, and in the observance of the moral law. Now Christ, considered merely as a man, loved the law of God so well, that he could not but take pleasure in a person that performed it, so far as that obedience reached. Virtue, in the mere outward part of it, will command respect, even from the vile and the wicked; much more will the good and pious man pay honour to the

practice of it. There is something amiable in sobriety, temperance, charity, justice, truth, and sincerity, though they may not proceed from the divinest principle of love to God rooted in the heart.

4. He had given some diligence in seeking after eternal life, and had a great concern about his soul. He came running to ask a question of the biggest importance, *What shall I do to inherit eternal life?* He was convinced there was a heaven and a hell, and he was willing to do something here to obtain happiness hereafter. He did not come with a design to put curious and ensnaring questions, as the Sadducees did; *Matt.* xxii. 23. but he seems to have an honest design to know the way to heaven and happiness, for he went away sorrowful when he could not comply with the demands of Christ. Though he thought he had practised a great deal of religion, yet he was willing to receive further instructions; *What lack I yet?* Is there any other precept to be performed, in order to entitle me to life eternal? Now our Saviour loves to see conscience awakened, to see the springs of religion opened and begin to flow: A divine teacher conceives some hopes of a man that is willing to be taught, and ready to learn, and therefore he loves him. This youth thought himself righteous, yet he did not think himself all-wise; and therefore submits to further instructions. Now it is a pleasure to communicate knowledge to those that long to receive it; and we pity them heartily when they do not comply with the necessary duties that are revealed to them, through the charms of some strong temptation.

5. Add to all this, that he had many civil advantages by reason of his riches, his authority, and his power. He was wealthy, and he was a ruler among the people; which things, though they cannot in themselves make any person amiable, yet when they are added to the former good qualities, they render them all more lovely and more valuable; and that because they are so seldom joined together. Dr. Goodman remarks very ingeniously here, "that his concern about his soul, was not a sick-bed meditation, for he was in health; nor a melancholy qualm of old age, for he was young: nor was it the effect of his being discontented and out of humour with the world, for he was rich and prosperous." It is seldom that we see a man in the prime of his days, possessing large treasures and dominions in this world, that will seek after the things of another; or that will shew due respect to his fellow-creatures, or practise so much as the form of godliness: that when all these meet together, as they did in this young man, they conspire to make him lovely in the eyes of every beholder. But alas! this unhappy youth, furnished, as he was with all these virtues, and these advantages, which our Lord beheld in him, and for which he loved him, yet he lost heaven for the love of this world. He refused to accept the proposals of Christ; he went away sorrowful, for he had large possessions. And this naturally leads me to the third head.

If this sermon be too long, it may be divided here.

III. Some remarks upon this mixed character; upon the folly, the guilt, and misery of a man so lovely, and so beloved of Christ.

1st Remark. How much good and evil may be mingled in the same person? What lovely qualities were found in this young man! and yet there was found in him a carnal mind in love with this world, and in a state of secret enmity to God. Our nature at first was a glorious composition of all that was good. How has sin ruined human nature from its primitive glory, and mingled a large measure of evil in its very frame! and yet

how has restraining grace kept our nature from losing every thing that is good and valuable, and from becoming universally monstrous and loathsome!

Let us take a survey of the world, and see what a mixture there is of amiable and hateful qualities amongst the children of men. There is beauty and comeliness; there is vigour and vivacity; there is good-humour and compassion; there is wit and judgment, and industry, even amongst those that are profligate and abandoned to many vices. There is sobriety, and love, and honesty, and justice, and decency amongst men that know not God, and believe not the gospel of our Lord Jesus. There are very few of the sons or daughters of Adam, but are possessed of something good and agreeable, either by nature or acquirement; therefore, when there is a necessary occasion to mention the vices of any man, I should not speak evil of him in the gross, nor heap reproaches on him by wholesale. It is very disingenuous to talk scandal in superlatives, as though every man who was a sinner, was a perfect villain, the very worst of men, all over hateful and abominable.

How sharply should our own thoughts reprove us, when we give our pride and malice a loose, to ravage over all the character of our neighbours, and deny all that is good concerning them, because they have something in them that is criminal and worthy of blame! Thus our judgment is abused by our passions; and sometimes this folly reigns in us to such a degree, that we can hardly allow a man to be wise or ingenious, to have a grain of good sense or good humour, that is not of our profession, or our party, in matters of church or state. Let us look back upon our conduct, and blush to think that we should indulge such prejudices, such a sinful partiality.

2d Remark. A man that has not true grace, nor holiness, may be the just object of our love: for we find several instances and several degrees of love were paid by Christ, the wisest and best of men, to a youth of a covetous and carnal temper; one who preferred earth to heaven, and valued his present possessions above those eternal treasures that Christ had promised him.

I confess, under the Old Testament, in the cxxxix Psalm, ver. 21, 22, David appeals to God, *do not I hate them, that hate thee?* and adds, *I hate them with a perfect hatred.* But this need not be construed to signify any malice in his heart against them, as a private person; but his design to fight against them, and suppress them, as a soldier, and a king, because they appeared publicly against God; for he adds, I am grieved at those that rise up against thee, I count them mine enemies. Besides, these persons were of so abandoned a character, that they seem to have had nothing good in them: and he might justly hate them, considered merely as sinners, in the same sense that we must hate ourselves, so far as we are sinful. I might add to all this, that they were cruel and bloody with regard to men, and they spoke wickedly against God, and were God's professed enemies, *ver.* 19, and 20. After all, it was much more allowable in David the Jew in the heat of his zeal, to talk thus, than it can be for us, christians; while we read the words of our Saviour, *Matt.* v. 43, 44, 45. We *have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy: But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you: that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust:* While we consider also in what a divine manner our Lord Jesus has exemplified his own precept, and has loved many of his

enemies, so as to die for them; and manifested so much natural affection, even for the young sinner in my text, because there were some good qualities found in him.

I will not say therefore within myself concerning any man, "I hate him utterly, and abhor him in all respects, because he has not true holiness:" but I will look upon him and consider whether their may not be some accomplishment in him, some moral virtue, some valuable talent, some natural or acquired excellency; and I will not neglect to pay due esteem to every deserving quality, wheresoever I find it. It is a piece of honour due to God our Creator, to observe the various signatures of his wisdom, that he has impressed upon his creatures, and the overflowing treasures of his goodness, which he has distributed among the works of his hands.

Thus I may very justly love a man, for whom, in the vulgar sense, I have no charity; that is, such a one as I believe to be in a state of sin and death, and have no present hope of his salvation. How could holy parents fulfil their duties of affection to their wicked children? or pious children pay due respect to sinful parents? How could a believer fulfil the law of love to an unbelieving brother, or a dearer relative, if we ought to admit of no love to persons that are in a state of enmity to God? How can we be followers of God as dear children, if we are not kind to the unthankful, and to the evil; *Luke* vi. 37. To those who have nothing of serious religion in them; *Gal.* vi. 10. *As we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially to them who are of the household of faith.*

As God has a peculiar love for his own children, for those who are renewed, and sanctified, and formed into his likeness; so ought we to love all the saints with a peculiar kind of affection, and take special delight in them, we should express a love of intimate fellowship unto them; a love of divine friendship, of spiritual pleasure, and hearty communion; rejoicing together with them in God our common Father, in Christ Jesus our common Head, and in the hope of our common Salvation; and we should ever be ready, in the first place to assist and support them, and supply their wants according to the calls of providence. But sinners also must have some share in our love.

3d Remark. How different is the special love of God, from the natural love of man! God seeth not as man seeth; he appoints not persons to eternal life, because of some agreeable accomplishments which they possess in this life. Jesus Christ himself, considered as God, did not bestow his special and saving love upon that young Israelite, whom, as man, he could not help loving. So Samuel was sent to choose a king for the Jews, among the sons of Jesse; 1 *Samuel* xvi. 6. When he saw Eliab appear, he looked on him, and said, *Surely the Lord's anointed is before him; but the Lord said to Samuel*, ver. 7. *Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature, because I have refused him.* Old Jesse, it may be, was ready to look upon his eldest son too, being pleased with his tall and comely figure, and to say within himself, "It is a pity that Eliab was not made a king." But David was God's beloved.

If the question were put to us, Who are the persons that are fit to stand in the court of God above, to be the inhabitants and ornaments of heaven? We should be ready to say, the beautiful and the ingenious, the souls of a sweet dispositon, and the persons of graceful behaviour. We are tempted to think that the well-born, the wise, the affable, and the well-accomplished, should all be made saints, and the favourites of God; but he sees with other eyes, he determines his special love by other principles, and makes another sort of distinction by his sovereign saving grace, unguided and unallured by the

merit of man. 1 Cor. i. 26, 27, 28, 29. *Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen: yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence.*

What would become of the morose, the rough natural tempers, if God loved none but such as were lovely in our eyes? What would become of all the deformed and the most uncomely pieces of human nature; the clownish, and the weak, and base things of this world, if God should choose none but the fair, and the well-bred, the well-figured, and the honourable? If this were the rule of his conduct, what dismal distinction would light upon thousands, and some good men too, who must wear in their faces, in this world, the dreadful sentence of their damnation in the next? But the great and sovereign God acts by other measures; he lays down to himself divine rules, that are to us unknown, and must be for ever unsearchable.

Some, who are endowed with native excellencies, he adorns with heavenly graces, and they shine as jewels set in rings of gold: Others, who have scarce any thing in them amiable by nature, are the objects of divine love, and made vessels of grace; though these do never make so charming an appearance among men. Moses the meek and obliging, Jonah the rough and the peevish, were both beloved of God; for he made saints and prophets of them. Abraham the rich, and Sarah the beautiful; Peter the poor fisherman, and Paul the man of mean aspect, and contemptible figure; were all beloved of God, and made heirs of eternal life. The conduct of the great God, in this matter, is so various, and his reasons so sublime and impenetrable, that it is in vain for us to attempt to trace out his rules of action.

Sometimes he chooses a man of great intellectual powers, and sets an invisible mark of divine love upon him: At another time he takes pleasure to pour contempt on all the pride of human reason, by choosing a foolish man, and making him an humble believer. Sometimes he exalts the man of natural virtue into a saint; and again, he spreads shame and confusion over all our own pretended righteousnesses and vain confidence, by culling out, here and there, a profane wretch, and converting him to faith and holiness, and in the mean time he leaves some that are sober, and have many human virtues, and good appearances, to perish with the Pharisee and hypocrite for ever, in their pride and self-righteousness. Jesus, the Man, looked upon this pretty youth that was well-born, sober, and virtuous, and he loved him; but the eternal God chose him not for a saint, for he suffered him to run madding after his many possessions, and to despise heaven. Here it becomes us to be silent and adore. O the depths of divine counsel! O the awful and glorious sovereignty of the grace of God, that could pass by so desirable a person, whom the man Jesus could not look upon without pity and love! *How unsearchable are his ways, and his judgments past finding out;* Rom. xi. 33.

Now though this be a very painful and tremendous meditation, yet there is an excellent use to be made of it. No man should despair of salvation, and the love of God, how mean and despicable soever his appearance be among men, or how remote soever from all that we call lovely. Let him forsake all sin and be happy for ever. Nor should the most amiable of creatures, in the natural or civil world, flatter themselves that they

are upon that account beloved of God, and shall certainly be partakers of eternal blessings in the world of glory. Let them follow Christ, and be saved.

But I would dwell upon this last thought a little, and therefore I shall propose my fourth remark in this manner.

4th Remark. Many lovely accomplishments, joined together, will not carry a natural man to heaven. The finest composition of beauty and youth, strength and riches, and all this embellished with many forms of godliness, and some shining outward virtues, will not obtain eternal life. The man that is thus qualified and adorned, if he prefers earth to heaven, and loves the possessions of this world, above spiritual treasures, abides in a state of condemnation and death. Grace is not a flower that grows in the field of nature, nor is it made by the heart of man; it is a divine seed; it is planted in our hearts by the Spirit of God; *John* i. 13. The saints *are born not of blood;* that is, by natural generation: *nor of the will of the flesh*, that is, by our own powers of nature; *nor of the will of man;* that is, by the influence that others have over us; *but of God.*

A man may set himself to work awhile for the good of his soul, and yet may miss of salvation: *Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it;* Matt. vii. 14. And *many which seek to enter in, shall not be able;* Luke xiii. 24. They seek, but not with all their might: they are not willing to forsake all for heaven, and therefore they obtain it not: they seek, perhaps, with diligence for a season, and give out before they have attained; they tire, and grow weary, and lose the prize: they seek, but not in God's appointed way, and according to the rules of the gospel; and no wonder if their labour be vain; for *he that striveth is not crowned except he strive lawfully;* 2 Tim. ii. 5. And this was the case of the rich young man; he sought eternal life, but not with all his soul, for he could not take up his cross and follow Christ: he sought the kingdom of God for a season; but when he came to the hard work of self-denial, he would not venture into that thorny path, but turned back, and *went away sorrowful.* He sought justification and peace with God, but not in a right way; for being *ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish his own, he fell short of the righteousness of God,* and attained it not; *Rom.* x. 3. He loved heaven well, but he loved this earth better: he chose his portion and happiness in this world, and lost his soul.

The eye of God, our Judge, is sharp and severe; he sees the hidden vices of the mind, through all the fairest veils of nature, and the brightest dress of outward virtue. We may cheat others with the disguises of religion, and allure the love of the best of christians: we may cheat ourselves by these fair appearances, and entertain a fond opinion of our own saintship; but the great God can never be imposed upon at this rate. He knows well what is lovely and excellent in his creatures; but when he seats himself upon his throne of judgment, all their shining ornaments of body and mind are blemished, are darkened, are lost in his eyes, if he discovers a secret love to sin in the heart. Where the love of this world prevails, it over-balances all other good qualities, though ever so valuable in themselves; and though they may create love in every beholder, yet the love of God is not to be purchased, nor persuaded, contrary to his own settled and eternal rules of judgment. *If any man love this world, the love of the Father is not in him;* 1 John ii. 15. nor does the Father love him. The prince of devils has many noble endowments, and intellectual glories; the natural powers of an angel remain still with him; but his inward enmity to God, confines him for ever to hell: and

in the sense of the apostle James, *Whosoever will be a friend to the world, is the enemy of God;* James iv. 4. though in many other excellencies he might be a fellow for angels.

Wise and happy is that soul who fears to build his hopes of heaven upon the sand, upon a shining but feeble foundation. Wise and happy is he who does not mistake the glories of nature for divine grace; who does not satisfy himself to seek a little after heaven, but resolves to find it, and parts with all for the knowledge and the love of Christ. While others, who pretend to much wisdom, raise their vain expectations of happiness, upon a few natural accomplishments, and devout wishes, this man pursues the work upon diviner principles, and brings it to perfection: and when others, at the great day of decision, meet with shame and terrible disappointment, he shall be applauded, in the face of angels, as the only wise man, and shall find himself for ever happy.

The 5th, and last remark, is this; how dangerous a snare is great riches! They become a sore temptation (even to persons well-inclined) to tie their souls fast to this world, and persuade them to neglect God, and Christ, and heaven. This was the case of the young man in my text; *he went away* from our Lord melancholy and grieved, that he could not join Christ and the world together: he *had great possessions*, and therefore he refused to be a follower of Christ, under the poor and mean circumstances of his appearance among men; see verses 22, 23. And our Lord himself makes this same remark, *How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God?* that is, as he explains it in the following verse, because it is so hard, for those who possess great riches, not to love them too well, and to trust in them as their chief good.

How many lovely qualities are here spoiled at once, by the love of this world! and a man that was not far from the kingdom of God, divided from Christ, and driven to a fatal distance from heaven, by this dangerous interposing snare! A wretched chain, though it was a golden one, that withheld his soul from the embraces of his Saviour. He was young, he was modest and humble, he had a desire to be saved, and he went far in the outward forms of godliness; *all these commands*, said he, *have I kept from my youth*, or childhood; and he had a mind to follow Christ too: but Jesus was poor, and his followers must take up their cross, and share in his poverty. This was the parting point; this was the bar to his salvation; he was *almost a christian*, but his riches prevented him from being *altogether so*. O fatal wealth and foolish possessor.

It became our blessed Lord, the heir of all things, to divest himself of wealth and grandeur, and to renounce all the pomp and glittering equipage of this world, when he came to introduce a religion so spiritual and so refined, as the gospel was: and it became him to put such a test as this to such as pretended to be his disciples; whether they durst venture to exchange the present world, and the visible enjoyments of it, for glories future and invisible? It was proper he should try whether they could deny themselves, and become poor for his sake, who made himself poor for their sakes, and promised them unknown treasures in heaven. But the test proved too severe, and the gate too strait for this young man, with all the bulk of his estate to enter in at it.

Well might the apostle teach Timothy, the young preacher, to *charge them that are rich in this world, not to trust in uncertain riches, but to do good* to the poor, to *distribute*, to the needy, that they *might lay up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come;* 1 Tim. vi. 17, &c. because men are so ready to think that a store of gold

is a good foundation to trust in for happiness here, and forget hereafter. Well might he admonish them *to lay hold on eternal life*, because they are so ready to hold their money fast, though they let eternal life go. They that have much, are often greedy of more, and thereby *fall into temptations and snares, into many foolish and hurtful lusts, that drown men in perdition: for the love of money is the root of all evil; which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith*, have forsaken Christ, *and pierced themselves through with many sorrows; ver.* 9, 10.

Shall I take occasion here to put the rich in mind of their danger, and intreat them to watch against the shining allurement that besets them around? Have a care lest your eyes be dazzled with this glittering world, and blinded to the gospel of Christ: and shall I comfort the poor, by telling them their privilege, how much more free they are from this golden snare? You have been used to meanness and poverty, therefore we may hope that the plainness and simplicity of the gospel will not offend you: that the doctrine of the cross, and the poverty of the Man of Nazareth, who hung upon it for your sakes, will not be a scandal to your thoughts, nor a bar to your faith. In the days of Christ, the *poor received the gospel; and not many rich, not many mighty*, have in any age been the followers of a despised Jesus.

O may the rich in this assembly be led by divine grace to break through all their temptations, and attend their Saviour, though his name, and his disciples here on earth, be surrounded with all the forms of contempt and poverty! And may the meaner hearers improve their advantage, and take up their cross, and follow their Lord, till they are all joined to the glorious assembly above, and made possessors of everlasting riches! *Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMON VII.

A HOPEFUL YOUTH FALLING SHORT OF HEAVEN.

I.

MUST all the charms of nature then,
So hopeless to salvation prove?
Can hell demand, can heaven condemn
The man whom Jesus deigns to love?

II.

The man, who sought the ways of truth,
Paid friends and neighbours all their due;
A modest, sober, lovely youth,
And thought he wanted nothing now?

III.

But mark the change: thus spake the Lord,
Come part with earth for heaven to-day:
The youth astonish'd at the word,
In silent sadness went his way.

IV.

Poor virtues, that he boasted so,
This test unable to endure,
Let Christ, and grace, and glory go,
To make his land and money sure!

V.

Ah foolish choice of treasures here!
Ah fatal love of tempting gold!
Must this base world be bought so dear!
And life and heaven so cheaply sold?

VI.

In vain the charms of nature shine,
If this vile passion governs me:
Transform my soul, O love divine!
And make me part with all for thee.

SERMON VIII.

A HOPEFUL YOUTH FALLING SHORT OF HEAVEN.

MARK X. 21.

THEN JESUS BEHOLDING HIM, LOVED HIM.

THE SECOND PART.

WHEN our Saviour dwelt upon earth, he found a young man in the coasts of Judea, that preferred the riches of this world to all the treasures of heaven; and yet Jesus cast an eye of love upon him.

In the foregoing discourse upon these words, it has been considered what sort of love Christ could shew to a man, whose soul was so vain and carnal; and what good qualities appeared in this youth, that could engage the love of our Saviour, notwithstanding the guilt of his covetousness; and some remarks were made upon a man so lovely, and so beloved of Christ.

First, The love which our Saviour manifested to this person, was not properly a divine love, for that would have changed his nature, and refined his carnal desires, and conferred grace and salvation upon him: we must understand it therefore only in this sense, that the affections of his human nature were drawn out towards something that was valuable and excellent in this young Israelite: he approved of those accomplishments which he beheld in him, and felt a sort of complacency in his person and character. He had an innocent and human desire of his welfare, he gave him divine instructions for this end, and pitied him heartily that he was so far gone in the love of the world, as to neglect the offer of heaven.

Secondly, The qualities which might attract our Saviour's love, were such as these: he was young and sprightly, and it was probable that he had something very agreeable in his aspect: his carriage was courteous and obliging, for he kneeled before our Lord, and saluted him with much civility: he had a religious education, much outward sobriety and virtue, so that he was ready to think himself a complete saint. *All these commands*, says he, *have I kept from my youth;* yet he was willing to receive further instructions, if any thing else were necessary, in order to eternal life. Add to all this, that he was rich and powerful, he was a ruler among the Jews, and had large possessions, which made his humility and other virtues appear the more amiable, because they so seldom are found in persons of an exalted station.

Thirdly, The remarks that were made upon a person that had so many good qualities, and yet missed of heaven, might instruct us not to disclaim any thing that is worthy and excellent, though it is mingled with much iniquity; but to pay respect and love, as our Lord Jesus did, to persons that have any thing valuable in them, though their virtues are imperfect, and fall short of saving grace. We may learn also, that God chooses not

as man would choose, nor saves all those that a wise and good man may well bestow his love upon. We are taught further, that many lovely accomplishments, joined together, are not sufficient to attain eternal life, unless we renounce this world, and follow Christ; and we are divinely warned of the danger of riches, how great a snare they sometimes prove to persons of a hopeful character.

Fourthly, We proceed now to the last thing proposed; and that is, to make an address to three sorts of persons, taking the occasion from the character in my text.

I. Those who have any thing lovely or excellent in them, but, through the power of a carnal mind, are kept at a distance from God, and have no title to heaven; such are beloved of men, but not beloved of God.

II. Those who are weaned, in some good measure, from this world, and have treasures in heaven, but are defective in those qualities that might render them amiable on earth; such are beloved of God, but not of men.

III. Those that are furnished with every good quality, and every grace, that are the objects of the special love of God, and almost every man loves them too.

I. Let me address myself to those who have any thing lovely or excellent in them, but, through the power of a carnal mind, are kept at a distance from God, and have no title to heaven. Such was the young man in the gospel; and according to the several good qualities that he possessed, I shall divide my exhortation to several persons.

1. To such as are endowed with any natural excellencies of body or mind. Youth and beauty, strength and health, wit and reason, judgment, memory, or sweet disposition; all these are the gifts of God in the world of nature, and render persons so far amiable as they are possessed of them. You that flourish in the vigour and glory of youth, and yet have no saving acquaintance with God in Christ, no right to eternal life; while I behold you, I would mourn over you with much compassion. What pity it is that the flower of your age should be employed only to sooth your vanity! to adorn your guilty passions, and to dress up the scenes of sin! That flower will wither in old age, and it leaves no perfume behind, but what arises from virtue and goodness; or, perhaps, you will give it up to untimely decay; by indulgence of irregular pleasures, you devote it to be blasted by the breath of Satan, and in the smoke of hell. But is it not pity, that a strong and healthy constitution should be wasted in slavery to your appetites, and in making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts of it? Why should not the powers of nature, in their first bloom and glory, adorn the kingdom of grace? Why should not our sprightly days, and the warmest hours of life, be employed in some useful activity for the interest of God? What a decency and honour is added to religion, by its fairest and youngest votaries? With what peculiar praises does the word of God recommend the character of youthful piety? How is the young king Josiah celebrated in the sacred records? that *while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his Father*, &c. 2 Chron. xxxiv. 3. How is Timothy commended, *who had known the holy scriptures from his very childhood;* 2 Tim. iii. 15. And there are some young in years, to whom the apostle John might address himself with the same pleasure as he does to the christian converts, whom he calls young men, strong in grace, who had the love of God abiding in them, and had overcome the wicked one; 1 *John* ii. 14. And he gives them in the next verse a most needful and friendly caution against the *love of the world, and the things of it*, lest they shut the love of the Father out of their hearts. What an abuse and waste of life are ye guilty of, when ye lay out the brightest

moments of it upon the works of darkness? and treasure up to yourselves everlasting darkness and fire?

I pity the young, the vigorous, the comely figures of human nature, that neglect to seek after divine grace, that are ruined and made wretched to all eternity, by their excessive love of the pleasures, or the pomp, or the riches of this vain world. A thousand such sinners, that were once the hope of their families, and the lovely ornaments of the place they lived in, are now cursing the day of their birth, and raging with despair in the midst of the wrath of God.

Let me speak a word also to those that have rich endowments of mind. Where we behold a sprightly genius, solid reason, and deep judgment, we cannot forbear loving the possessors of them: we cannot forbear to say, "It is pity that so much wit should be abused to ridicule religion, and do honour to foul iniquity; that it should be enslaved to all the arts of lewdness, and dress up the shame of nature in the charms of language." Or if it be not debased to so exceeding vile purposes, yet at best, it is pity it should be all employed in jesting and trifling, in mirth and raillery, and vain amusement. Might it not have been laid out infinitely better, to allure sinners to the love of God, to adorn the truths of our holy profession, and give credit to the gospel of Christ, even in the eyes of the witty and profane?

I pity the man of lively imagination without sanctifying grace. What a lovely wilderness of blooming weeds! fair indeed in various colours, but useless and unsavoury, and it must be burnt up with unquenchable fire. You are the persons whose happy talents give a relish to the common comforts of life; you diffuse joy and pleasure through all the company, and enliven the dullest hours; your presence is coveted by all men, and you are beloved of all: but how dismal is your state, if you neglect holiness, and are not beloved of God! Can you imagine that your gay fancy will brighten the gloom of hell? or give airs to yourselves, or your companions, in those hideous regions of sorrow? It is a most melancholy reflection to consider, that persons of your accomplishments should increase the number of the damned; and there is no sport or amusement admitted there, to divert the anguish of the tortured mind, or to relieve that heavy and everlasting heart-ache.

I pity the man of strong reason and great sagacity of judgment, that hath traced nature in her most secret recesses; that has sounded the depths of the sea, and measured the heavens; but has spent no time in searching the deep things of God, and lets the mysteries of religion lie unregarded as obscure and useless things. He has never sounded the depth of his own misery and guilt, as he is a son of Adam: nor is he acquainted with the way of climbing to heaven by the cross of the Son of God. Reason is a faculty of supreme excellence among the gifts of nature, and it is dreadful to think that it should ever be engaged in opposition to divine grace. How great and wretched are the men of reason, who strain the nerves of their soul to overturn the doctrine of Christ! who labour with all their intellectual powers to shake the foundations of the gospel, to diminish the authority of the scriptures, and to unsettle the hope of feeble christians!

There are others who employ the best powers of the soul in pursuing the interests of this life; they are wise in contriving to gratify their appetites, to fill their coffers, and to heap up to themselves wealth and honours; and wish to secure all these to their posterity after death: *They call their lands by their own names*, and perpetuate their memory to

the latest generations, but make no provision for their own souls: they are wise to set in order their houses in the day of their health, and all things prepared for their dying hour, besides the concerns of their own eternity; these are delayed from day to day, and left at the utmost hazard; and still they think the next month, or the next year, it is time enough to prepare for heaven, when perhaps a summons is sent suddenly from on high; *Thou fool, this night is thy soul required of thee;* Luke xii. 20. What confusion and fear, what hurry and distress of spirit will seize you in that hour? You that have laid out all your wisdom upon the little businesses of this life, and trifled with affairs of everlasting importance; you must go down to the chambers of death in surprise and anguish; you must leave all the fruits of your wisdom behind you, and be branded for eternal fools.

I pity those who are blessed with a large memory, and would plead with you this day for the sake of your souls. The memory, it is a noble repository of the mind, it is made to receive divine truths, to be stored with the ideas of God and his grace, with the glories of Christ and heaven: it is given us to furnish and supply the heart and tongue upon all occasions, for worship, for conference, and for holy joy. What pity it is so wonderous a capacity should be crouded with vile images, with wanton scenes, with profane jests, and idle stories! Or, at best, it is filled with gold, and silver, and merchandize; with lands and houses, ships and insurances; it is all inscribed with stocks, annuities, and purchases, and turned into a mere book of accounts, a trading shop, or an everlasting exchange: night and day, the buyers and sellers are passing through this temple, which should be consecrated to God; and there is no room left for the thoughts of heaven there. Shall these busy swarms of cares and vanities for ever fill up so large a chamber of the soul? Shall impertinences be for ever thrust into this treasury? such as will stand you in no stead, when you are dismissed from the body, but shall vanish all at once in that hour, and shall leave your spirits poor and naked: or if they follow you to the world of spirits, it will be but as so much fuel gathered for your future burning.

Think a little with yourselves, ye possessors of these rich endowments of the mind, when you have been honoured here on earth, can you bear to be doomed to eternal shame and punishment in hell? Shall this wit and this reason be there employed to express your hatred against God, and to forge perpetual blasphemies against the Majesty of Heaven? are you willing to be joined to the society of devils, and be engaged in their abominable work? Shall this sprightly fancy, this subtle reason, this large memory, serve for no purpose, but to aggravate your guilt, and your damnation? Shall these fine talents sharpen your misery, and give edge to the keenest reflections of conscience; conscience, that inward sting of the mind; conscience, that immortal tormentor? Yet this must be the certain portion of those who spend their life, and lie down in death, with these talents unsanctified: for the anguish and torture of sinful souls must rise and grow for ever, in proportion to the glory of their abused endowments.

Though, perhaps, I have been tedious already under this head, yet, before I part with it, I must address myself to those who are born with a sweet disposition, that seem to be cast in a softer mould than the rest of men. I love and pity those of my acquaintance who are blessed with so divine a temper, who have tenderness and good-will in their very form and aspect, and I mourn to think that any of these should perish for ever. You are the favourites of all men, and beloved by all who enjoy the pleasure

of your acquaintance; do ye not long to be the favourites of God too? You seem to be made for the delight and comfort of mankind: but shall this be all your portion? Good-humour is the composition of your nature, *and the law of kindness is on your lips! when the ear hears* you, *then it blesses you; and when the eye sees* you, *it gives witness to* you. But is this enough to depend upon for eternal life? Perhaps you have borrowed part of the valuable qualities of that good man Job, you *have delivered the poor that cry, and the fatherless that had none to help him;* you *have caused the widow's heart to sing for joy, and the blessing of him that was ready to perish, has come often upon you;* Job xxix. 11, 12, 13. There is so much natural goodness in your constitution, that leads you on, by a sweet instinct, to the practice of many charities: but this is not saving grace. If Jesus Christ himself were upon earth in this humbled state, he would look upon you as man, and love you: but the holy God looks down from heaven, and beholds you as the object of his just and divine hatred, while you live in a state of vanity and sin, drunken with sensual pleasures, and at enmity with God.

This sweetness of temper, that springs from your blood, and the happy mixture of humours; or, at best, from the mere natural frame of your spirits, will never pass, upon the great tribunal, for holiness and inward religion. With all this charming appearance of virtues, these colours that look like heaven, you will be doomed to hell, and perpetual misery, unless there be found in you some nobler qualities, such as love to God, mortification to this world, the knowledge and faith of Jesus Christ. If these be not the springs of your charity and love to men, you will not be secured from the condemning sentence of the Judge, nor from the company of devils in the future world.

But, oh! how will your soft and gentle natures bear the insult and rage of those malicious spirits? How will your temper, that had something so lovely in it, sustain to be banished for ever from the world of love? to be for ever excluded from all the regions of peace and concord? How will your souls endure the madness and contention, the envy and spite of wicked angels; You that delighted on earth in the works of peace, what will ye do when your tender dispositions shall be hourly ruffled by the uproar and confusion of those dark regions? and instead of the society of God and blessed spirits, ye shall be eternally vexed with the perverse tempers of your fellow-sinners, the sons of darkness? O that I could speak in melting language, or in the language of effectual terror, that I might by any means awaken your souls to jealousy and timely fear! That so many natural excellencies, as God has distributed amongst you, might not be wasted in sin, abused to dishonour, and aggravate your everlasting misery.

This Sermon may be divided here.

2. My next exhortation shall be addressed to those youths who have been trained up in all the arts of civility, and have acquired a courteous and becoming carriage. There is something lovely in such an appearance, and it commands the love even of the rude and uncivil. It so nearly resembles the sweetness of natural temper, and imitates good humour so much to the life, that it often passes upon company instead of nature, and attains many valuable ends in human society. But where both these are happily joined, how shining is that character, and universally beloved? We are pleased and charmed with your conversation, whose manners are polished, and whose language is refined from the rude and vulgar ways of speech. You know how to speak civil things, without flattery, upon all occasions; to instruct, without assuming a superior air, and to reprove

without a frown, or forbidding countenance. You have learned when to speak, and when to be silent, and to perform every act of life with its proper graces; and can ye be content with all this good breeding, to be thrust down to hell? Is it not pity that you should be taught to pay all your honours to men, and practise none to the living God? Have you not read those duties in connection; 1 Pet. ii. 17. *Honour all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, and honour the king.* And why will you divide what God has joined, and give every one their due, besides God your Maker? how dare you treat the creatures with decency and ceremony, and treat God the Creator with neglect? salute all men with their proper titles of distinction, and not learn how to address God in prayer? pay due visits to all your acquaintance, and yet scarce ever make a visit to the mercy-seat, or bow your knees before the Majesty of Heaven.

I pity those who have all the arts of complaisance in perfection, and practise civility in every form; but are very little acquainted with the forms of godliness, and never yet felt any thing of the life of religion, or the powers of the world to come. How mournful a sight is it to behold a well accomplished gentleman, yet a vile sinner! A pretty obliging youth among men, but deaf and obstinate to all the calls of God, and the entreaties of a dying Saviour! A person of a free and ingenuous deportment, yet in chains of slavery to corruption and death! and how unspeakably sorrowful will it be at the last day, to see such as these, the gay, the affable, the fair-spoken, and the well-bred sinner, in the utmost agonies of horror and despair, mourning a lost God, a lost soul, and a lost heaven!

Let me speak once more, and try to provoke you to jealousy. Shall the rugged and clownish part of mankind press forward into that kingdom which ye despise? Will ye be patient to see some of the unbred and unpolished set at the right hand of the Judge, and yourselves with shame, be divided to the left? How will ye endure to see the honours of heaven put upon those whom you have so often despised in your hearts upon earth? Can you imagine that that tribunal will be bribed with fair speeches? or that any thing will be accepted in that court, besides solid and hearty religion? Suffer this exhortation then, and receive this advice, you that are not used to deny any thing to your friends, you that love to oblige those who ask any reasonable favor at your hands; nor let me plead this day in vain.

3. To those that have enjoyed the blessing of religious parents, and a pious education; that have been bred up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, in the knowledge and practice of the moral law, and in the outward performance of religion, according to the appointments of the gospel. Children, we love you for your fathers' sakes: we love to look upon you, for you are the little living images of our dearest friends: we have loved to ask you the younger questions that your parents have taught you, and to see the first-fruits of their instruction and holy care; but we pity you, from our very souls, when we behold you break the bars of your education, and making haste to ruin: or when, at best, ye go on and tread the circle of outward duties, as ye are led by custom and form, with a neglect of inward christianity, and hearty godliness.

Did your parents love God above all earthly things, and will ye prefer the love of this world above all things heavenly and divine? Have ye had such shining examples of holiness brought so near you to no purpose! Do they pray for you daily? Do they daily mourn over you, and hope, and wish, and exhort you to take care of your souls? And are you resolved that their counsels, their prayers, and their tears, shall be laid out upon you in vain! Is this the return you make for all their care and compassion? They

tell you daily that they can have *no greater joy than to see their children walking in the truth*, and will you cruelly disappoint their pleasures, and bring down their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave? Perhaps there are some of you, who already have parted with your parents, and their spirits are at rest; and has neither their life, nor their death, made serious and lasting impressions upon you; have they entreated you in their last dying moments, by all that is dear and sacred, to make sure of heaven? And will you abandon these entreaties, and sell your souls to the world, and to death, for a few perishing temptations? Have they laid a solemn charge upon you, at their last farewel, to travel in the paths of piety, and meet them on mount Sion in the great day? and have you wandered already from this high road of holiness, and forgot the solemnity and the charge? Shall your parents dwell for ever with their God, and shall their children for ever dwell in fire prepared for the devil and his angels?

You cannot sin at so easy and so cheap a rate as others. You must break through stronger bonds, and do bolder violence to your consciences, before you can indulge iniquity, and pursue wickedness. Your temptations to sin have been less than others, and your advantages for salvation have been much greater. Our hearts bleed within us, to think of your double guilt, and your aggravated damnation; to think that you should not only be separated from your parents, and their God, for ever, but that your place of torment shall be the hottest also amongst all your companions in misery.

What anguish and inward vexation will seize you, when ye shall reflect how nigh ye were raised in outward privileges, and how near ye were brought to heaven! and how you quitted your interest, and your hopes there, for the trifles of this life, for a base lust, or a foolish vanity! What will ye say, when ye shall see *many coming from the east, and from the west*, from families of wickedness, from the ends of the earth, and from the borders of hell, and sit down with your fathers in the kingdom of heaven; while you, *the children of the kingdom, are cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth;* Matt. viii. 11, 12. I presume thus far with freedom to address you, *if by any methods I might provoke to emulation them which are of the flesh of Israel, of the kindred of the saints, and might save some of them;* Rom. xi. 14.

4. To those who have taken some pains in seeking after eternal life, and are still inquiring the way thither. Have a care of resting in the mere practice of moral duties, or in the outward profession of christianity: never content yourselves with the righteousness of the Pharisee. Were your virtues more glorious than they are, and your righteousnesses more perfect, they could never answer for your former guilt, before the throne of a just and holy God. It is only the atonement of Christ, and his all-sufficient sacrifice, which can stand you in stead there; and it is pity that a youth, of so much virtue, should fall short of heaven, and be but almost a christian. It is pity that you should have gained so large a share of knowledge, and so honourable a character of sobriety, and, after all, want *the one thing needful*, an universal change, and renovation of your hearts, by receiving the gospel. Have you proceeded thus far, and will you not go on to perfection? *Take heed that ye lose not the things that ye have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward;* 2 John 8.

It is pity you should inquire the way to heaven, and not walk in it, when it is marked out before your feet with so much plainness: it is pity you should indulge the love of

this world so far, as to suffer it to forbid you the pursuit of a better; or at best, when ye receive instructions about your souls, you let the affairs of this life overwhelm and bury that good seed, and it never grows up to practice. What would you say to the folly of a man, who has a long and hazardous journey to make, to take possession of a large estate, and once a week he comes to inquire the way, and hears a fair description of all the road, perhaps he mourns his long neglect, and resolves upon the journey; but the next six days are filled up with a thousand impertinences; and when the seventh returns, he has not taken one step forward in the way?

Believe me, sirs, it is not an easy thing to be saved: laziness, and mere inquiries, will never effect your happiness, nor secure your souls from perdition: and all the pains you have already taken will be lost, if you give over the pursuit. Let me call some of you this day to remember your former labours, the prayers and tears that you have poured out in secret before God; remember your days of darkness, and your nights of terror, the groans of conscience, and the inward agonies you felt, when you were first awakened to behold your guilt and danger; remember these hours, and these sorrows; and love and pity your own souls so far, as to pursue the work, and let not your pains be lost: *Have ye suffered so many things in vain, if it be yet in vain;* Gal. iii. 4. Ye have wrestled with some sins, and have in part got the mastery over them; and shall a darling lust overcome you at last, and slay your souls with eternal death? Ye have resisted the tempter in some of his assaults, and put the powers of hell to flight; will you give up yourselves at last to be led in triumph by Satan, and become his everlasting slaves? Methinks you look so amiable in those victories ye have already obtained, that I would fain have you press onward through the field of battle, fulfil the warfare, and receive the crown.

The ministers of the gospel look upon you with concern and pity: we love you, because you have proceeded thus far in religion; but ye shall not be the beloved of God, if ye stop here, or go back again to sin and folly. We had a hopeful prospect of you once, and said to our Lord in prayer, "Surely these shall be one day the inhabitants, and the supports of thine house; these young plants shall one day be fruitful trees in thy vineyard; they shall be pillars in thy holy temple." But alas! there is a death upon our hopes, there is a darkness and a lethargy upon your souls: we look upon you in all these your endowments, we mourn over you with compassion, and with zeal we express our grief and our love: "Awake, ye young sinners, who have deserved our love; awake, that ye sleep not to everlasting death."

5. To those that are rich in this world, and are furnished with the former good qualities too. I am well assured, while I address myself to this assembly, I speak to many persons of this character.* Ye are wealthy and condescending, like the young man in my text; ye are often uncovered, and ye pay reverence to the ministers of the gospel, as he did; ye give us honours and civilities beyond our merit or wish; ye come and ask of us the same question, *What shall we do to inherit eternal life?* And we tell you from the word of God, *Love not the world, nor the things of the world; for where the love of the world is, the love of the Father is not. If riches increase, set not your heart upon them. Mortify your affections that are upon the earth, and deny yourselves, take up your cross, and follow Christ:* become his disciples, without reserve, in faith,

* This discourse was delivered at Tunbridge Wells.

and love, and universal holiness. While we propose these paths to eternal happiness, shall it be said concerning you, they went away sorrowful, having great possessions?

Your condescending and affable deportment, looks brighter by all the rich lustre of your habits; and the bigger your circumstances are, the more lovely is your humble attention to the ministers of Christ, and your readiness to hear our words is the more commendable: but will ye be hearers only, and never practise? The time is coming, and the hour makes haste upon you, when ye shall stand upon the borders of the grave, and look into that world of spirits, where all the honours and distinctions of this world are known no more. Ye shall be stripped of those vanities which ye loved above God and heaven. Think how mean and despicable a figure your souls will make amongst fallen angels, if the love of this world, and neglect of God, should bring you into that dreadful company. What gay and swelling figures soever you have made on earth, you will make but a poor and wretched one in that world, if ye are found destitute of the riches of grace; and it will be a mournful inscription written on your tomb, "*This rich man died—and he lift up his eyes in hell;*" Luke xvi. 23. *But, beloved, we hope better things of you, though we thus speak, and things that accompany salvation;* Heb. vi. 9.

Thus I have finished the first general exhortation, to those who have any valuable qualities attending them, but through the love of this world are tempted to neglect heaven.

The second exhortation is addressed to those who are weaned, in some good degree, from this world, and have treasures in heaven, but are defective in those good qualities which might render them amiable upon earth. I confess I have no direct commission from my text to address you here: but I am unwilling and ashamed that a rich young man should go to hell with some more lovely appearances upon him than you have, who are in the way to heaven.

You have chosen God for your eternal portion, and your highest hope; you have chosen his Son Jesus for your only Mediator, and your way to the Father; you have chosen the worship and the ordinances of God as your dearest delight; ye are the chosen objects of the love of God, and his grace has inclined you to love him above all things. Methinks I would not have any blot cast upon so many excellencies. Be ye advised therefore to seek after that agreeable temper and conduct which may make you beloved of men too; that the wisest and best of men may choose you for an honour to their acquaintance and company. This will render your profession more honourable, and make religion itself look more lovely in the sight of the world.

What a foul blemish it is to our christianity, when we shall hear it said, "Here is a man who professes the gospel of grace, but he does not practise the decencies that the light of nature would teach him! He tells us, that he belongs to heaven; but he has so little of humanity in his deportment, that he is hardly fit company for any upon earth." Shall it be said of any of you, "Here is a man that pretends to the love of God, but he is morose in his disposition, rude in his behaviour, and makes a very unlovely figure amongst men? Let him fill what station he will in the church, he bears but a disagreeable character in the house, and disgraces the family or the city where he dwells. What his secret virtues or graces are, we know not, for they shine all inward: he keeps all his goodness to himself, and never suffers his light to shine out amongst his neighbours."

Can I bear that it should be said concerning me, "He seems indeed to have something of the love of God in him, but he is so rough in his natural temper, and so uncorrected in his manners, that scarce any man loves him? He may bend his knees to God in prayer, but he has not common civility towards men. His morality and honesty appear not upon him with honour: his virtue does not seem to sit well about him, and his religion is dressed in a very unpleasing form." Is this the way to give reputation to the gospel? Is this to *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things?* Tit. ii. 10. When we become christians, we *put away bitterness and wrath, and clamour, and evil-speaking, and filthiness, and scurrilous jests;* Eph. iv. 31. and v. 4. We are commanded to *speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers;* but to be *gentle, and shew meekness to all;* Tit. iii. 2. *to prefer one another in honour; to bless, and curse not; to rejoice with them that rejoice, and to weep with them that weep; to condescend to men of low estate; and, if possible, to live peaceably with all men;* Rom. xii. 14, 15, 16, 18.

Are there any souls here of this unpleasing character and carriage! Did you ever read these words in your bibles? Do ye think these are the commands of Christ, or no? You profess to love him above all, but what care have you taken to obey these precepts of his? or do you think the sublime practices of faith and adoration will make those lower duties needless? Have ye found the sweetness of being at peace with God, and tasted of the pleasures of his love; and can ye disregard all the practices and pleasures of love and peace among men?

We are not required indeed to sell truth for peace, nor strict godliness for the forms of civility. There is no need that we should conform ourselves to any of the sinful practices of this world, in order to fulfil the law of love. But wheresoever the customs of the place where we dwell are consistent with the strict and holy rules of Christ, we should practise them so far, as to render ourselves agreeable to those with whom we converse, that we may shine in the world as the honours of Christ, and that unbelievers may be won by our conversation, to come and hear our gospel, to learn the same faith, and embrace the same hope: Not only the *things that are true, and honest, and just, and pure,* but the *things that are lovely* in the sight of men, and *things that are of good report,* must be the subjects of our meditation, our learning, and practice; *Phil.* iv. 8. St. Paul, that great apostle, did not think these things unworthy of his care; he enjoins them upon the primitive christians from his own example, and promises them the presence of the God of peace. These are the things which I have taught you, saith he, *these ye have heard and seen in me;* conform your manners to these rules, *and the God of peace shall be with you;* ver. 9.

Believe me, friends, the natural habit of christianity is all decency and loveliness: We put the religion of our Saviour into a disguise, and make it look unlike itself, if our temper be sour and fretful, if our carriage be coarse and rude, and our speech savour of roughness and wrath. A Jew might make a better apology, for a harsh and severe deportment, than a christian could do; he might put on a morose air with better countenance, and plead the dispensation he was under, the bondage of the law, and the terrors of mount Sinai. But we under the gospel, are free-born; *Gal.* iv. 26, 31. and our carriage should be ingenuous in all respects. John the Baptist, in his garment of hair, may be indulged in a roughness of speech; he was but a forerunner of the gospel, and can hardly be called a christian: But the followers of the Lamb should have a mild aspect, a pleasing manner, that every one who beholds us may

love us too; that the Son of God, if he were here upon earth, might look upon us, and love us in both his natures, with a divine and human love.

Thirdly, The last address I would make to those who are furnished with every good quality, and every divine grace, who are beloved by God and men. Such a one was our Lord Jesus Christ in the days of his flesh: He, from his very childhood, *grew in wisdom, and in stature, and in favour with God and man;* Luke ii. 52. He had further discoveries of divine love made to him daily: and as his acquaintance increased in his younger years, so did his friends too, till his divine commission made it necessary for him to oppose the corruptions of his country, and reform a wicked age, and thus expose himself to the anger of a nation that would not be reformed. There was something lovely in his human nature, beyond the common appearance of mankind; for his body was a temple, in which the godhead dwelt in a peculiar and transcendent manner, and his soul was intimately united to divinity. I cannot but think, that, in a literal sense, he was *fairer than the children of men*, and that there was *grace in his lips*, and a natural sweetness in his language; *Psalm* xlv. 2. If the Jews beheld *no comeliness in him, if his visage was marred more than the sons of men*, it was because he *was a man of* uncommon *sorrows, and acquainted with grief;* which might cast something of heaviness or gloom upon his countenance, or wear out the features of youth too soon. But surely our Lord, in the whole composition of his nature, in the mildness of his deportment, and in all the graces of conversation, was *the chiefest of ten thousands, and altogether lovely.* How amiable are those who are made like him!

Such was John the beloved disciple; you may read the temper of his soul in his epistles: What a spirit of love breathes in every line! What compassion and tenderness to the babes in Christ! What condescending affection to the young men, and hearty good-will to the fathers, who were then his equals in age! With what obliging language does he treat the beloved Gaius, in his third letter; and with how much civility, and hearty kindness, does he address the elect lady and her children, in the second! In his younger years, indeed, he seems to have had something more of fire and vehemence, for which he was surnamed *A son of thunder;* Mark iii. 17. But our Lord saw so much good temper in him, mixed with that sprightliness and zeal, that he expressed much pleasure in his company, and favoured him with peculiar honours and endearments above the rest. This is the disciple who was taken into the holy mount with James and Peter, and saw our Lord glorified before the time: this is the disciple who leaned on his bosom at the holy supper, and was indulged in the utmost freedom of conversation with his Lord; *John* xiii. 23, 24, 25. This is the man who obtained this glorious title, *The disciple whom Jesus loved;* that is, with a distinguishing and particular love. As God, and as a Saviour, he loved them all like saints; but as man, he loved St. John like a friend; *John* xxi. 20. and when hanging upon the cross, and just expiring, he committed his mother to his care; a most precious and convincing pledge of special friendship.

O how happy are the persons who most nearly resemble this apostle, who are thus privileged, thus divinely blessed! How infinitely are ye indebted to God your Benefactor, and your Father, who has endowed you with so many valuable accomplishments on earth, and assures you of the happiness of heaven! It is he who has made you fair, or wise; it is he who has given you ingenuity, or riches, or, perhaps, has favoured you with all these; and yet has weaned your hearts from the love of this world, and led you to the pursuit of eternal life: it is he that has cast you in so refined a mould, and given

you so sweet a disposition, that has inclined you to sobriety and every virtue, has raised you to honour and esteem, has made you possessors of all that is desirable in this life, and appointed you a nobler inheritance in that which is to come. What thankfulness does every power of your natures owe to your God! that heaven looks down upon you, and loves you, and the world around you fix their eyes upon you, and love you: that God has formed you in so bright a resemblance of his own Son, his first-beloved, and has ordained you joint-heirs of heaven with him; *Rom.* viii. 17.

Watch hourly against the temptations of pride; remember the fallen angels, and the once exalted station; and have a care lest ye also *be puffed up, and fall into the condemnation of the devil.* Walk before God with exactest care, and in deepest humility. Let that divine veil be spread over all your honours, that as you are the fairest images of Christ, ye may be dressed like him too; for he who is the highest Son of God, is also the holiest of the sons of men; he who is personally united to the godhead, and is one with his Creator, is the humblest of every creature.

HYMN FOR SERMON VIII.

A HOPEFUL YOUTH FALLING SHORT OF HEAVEN.

I.

THUS far 'tis well: you read, you pray,
You hear God's holy word,
You hearken what your parents say,
And learn to serve the Lord.

II.

Your friends are pleas'd to see your ways,
Your practice they approve;
Jesus himself would give you praise,
And look with eyes of love.

III.

But if you quit the paths of truth,
To follow foolish fires,
And give a loose to giddy youth,
With all its wild desires;

IV.

If you will let your Saviour go,
To hold your riches fast,
Or hunt for empty joys below,
You'll lose your heaven at last.

V.

The rich young man whom Jesus lov'd,
Should warn you to forbear:
His love of earthly treasures prov'd
A fatal golden snare.

VI.

See, gracious God, dear Saviour, see
How youth is prone to fall:
Teach them to part with all for thee,
And love thee more than all.

SERMON IX.

THE HIDDEN LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN.

COL. iii. 3.

FOR YE ARE DEAD, AND YOUR LIFE IS HID WITH CHRIST IN GOD.

THE FIRST PART.

DEATH and Life are two words of a solemn and important sound. They carry so much of force and moment in them, as must awaken mankind to attention; and therefore the Spirit of God often uses them as metaphors, to express things unseen and spiritual, and to describe the state both of saints and sinners; So that all who are alive on the face of the earth, in the language of scripture, are said to be dead too, but in different senses. Those who are in a state of nature, and under the power of sin, unpardoned and unsanctified, are dead in trespasses and sins; yet they live the life of brutes in the lusts of the flesh, or the life of devils in the lusts of the mind; *Eph.* ii. 1, 2. Those who are recovered from the fall, and brought into a state of grace by the gospel of Christ, are said to be dead also; that is, they are dead to sin; *Rom.* vi. 11. and they are crucified, and so dead to the world; *Gal.* vi. 14. The delights of sin are hateful to them, so that they allure them not to forsake their God; and the lawful enjoyments of life are so far tasteless to the saints, in comparison of the things of heaven, that they have much less influence, than once they had, to tempt them away from God, and from the practice of holiness.

It is in this sense the christian Colossians are said to be dead in my text. But they have another, a new life, and that of a different kind; such as is mentioned in this verse, and which is hid with Christ in God; and it is this hidden life shall be the chief subject of my discourse.

These latter words of the text afford two plain and easy propositions or doctrines.

I. That the life of a christian is a hidden life.

II. That it is hid with Christ in God. Let us meditate on them in order.

Doctrine I. A christian's life is a hidden life.—Here we shall, *First*, Consider what is this life, which is said to be hidden. And, *Secondly*, In what respects it is so.

First, What is this life of a christian which is said to be hidden?

Not the animal life, whereby he eats, drinks, sleeps, moves and walks; this is visible enough to all about him. Not the civil life, as he stands in relation to other men in the world, whether as a son, as a father, a master or a servant, a trader, a labourer, or an officer in the state: For all these are public, and seen of men.

But the hidden life is that whereby he is a christian indeed; his spiritual life, wherein he is devoted to God, and lives to the purposes of heaven and eternity. And this is the same life, which, in other parts of scripture, is called eternal; for the life of grace survives the grave, and is prolonged into glory. The same life of piety and inward pleasure, which begins on earth, is fulfilled in heaven; and it may be called the

spiritual, or the eternal life, according to different respects; for it is the same continued life acting in different stations or places, and running through time and eternity; 1 *John* v. 11, 12. Eternal life is in the Son, and he that hath the Son, hath this life; it is begun in him, he is already possessed of it in some degree.

As the life of the child is the same with that of the full-grown man; as the same vital principles and powers run through the several successive stages of infancy, youth and manhood; so the divine life of a saint, begun on earth, runs through this world, through death, and the separate state of souls; it appears in full-grown perfection, in the final heaven, when the whole saint shall stand complete in glory. Thus the spiritual life of a christian is eternal life begun; and eternal life is the spiritual life made perfect.

If we would describe this life in short, it may be represented thus: It is a life of faith, holiness and peace; a life of faith, or dependance upon God for all that we want; a life of holiness, rendering back again to God, in a way of honour and service, whatsoever we receive from him in a way of mercy; and a life of peace in the comfortable sense of the favour of God, and our acceptance with him through Jesus Christ. All these begin on earth, and in this sense faith itself, as well as peace and holiness, shall abide in heaven: we shall for ever be dependants, for ever happy and for ever holy.

In a state of nature the man lived such a sinful and carnal life, that was more properly called death; but when he becomes a believer, a true christian, he is new created; 2 *Cor.* v. 17. new-born; *John* iii. 3. raised from the dead, and quickened to a new life; *Eph.* ii. 1, 5. which is called being risen with Christ, in the verses before my text; *Col.* iii. 1. And this very spiritual life, as the effect of our symbolical resurrection with Christ, is the subject of several verses of the 6th chapter to the Romans, whence I cannot but infer the same to be designed here, *viz.* that the christian who is dead to sin, is risen with Christ, and alive to God; as *Rom.* vi. 11. All the life that he lived before, with all the shew and bravery of it, with all the bustle and business, the entertainments and delights of it, was but a mere dream, a fancy, the picture of life, a shadow and emptiness, and but little above the brutes that perish. Now he lives a real, a substantial, a divine life, a-kin to God and angels, and quite of a different nature from what the men of this world live.

There is this difference indeed which the scripture makes between the spiritual life and the eternal. The first chiefly respects the operations of the soul, for the life of the body is not immortal here: the second includes soul and body too, for both shall possess immortality hereafter. The first is attended with many difficulties and sorrows; the second is all ease and pleasure. The first is represented as the labour and service: the last, as the great, though unmerited, reward; *Gal.* vi. 8. He that soweth to the Spirit, and fulfils the duties of the spiritual life, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. The one is the life of holiness and inward peace, though mingled with many defects, and surrounded with a thousand disadvantages and trials: the other, is the same life of holiness and peace, having surmounted every difficulty, shining and exulting in full joy and glory.

Secondly, We come to consider, in what respect this life may be called a hidden life.

And here I shall distinguish that part of it, which is more usually called the spiritual life, and is exercised in this world, from that which is more frequently called

life eternal, and belongs rather to the world to come: and then I shall make distinct inferences from the consideration of each.

Now let us consider wherein the spiritual life is said to be hidden.

I. The acts and exercises of it are secret and unknown to the public world. The saint is much engaged in the important and hidden concerns of his divine life; and his converse is with God and Christ, who dwell in the world of invisibles.

Who knows the secret transactions between God and the soul of a christian, when he first entered into covenant with God, through Christ the Mediator, and began this happy life? Who can tell the inward workings of his spirit towards Jesus Christ his Lord in the first efforts of his faith, and embraces of our Saviour? Who was acquainted with the secret sorrows of his soul, when he was first set a mourning for his past sins, and humbled himself in bitterness before God? Or who can express the surprising delight, and secret satisfaction he felt at heart, when God communicated to him the first lively hope of forgiveness and divine salvation? O the unknown joys of such an hour which some christians have experienced, when a divine beam of light shone into their souls, and revealed Jesus Christ within them as St. Paul speaks: when they saw his all-sufficiency of righteousness and grace, to answer their infinite necessities; and when they durst believe in him as their Saviour!

And as the beginnings of this life are hidden from the world, so the exercises and progress of it are a secret too. While the world is following after idols and vanity, the christian, in his retired chamber, breathes after his God and his Redeemer, and gives a loose to his warmest affections, in the pursuit of his Almighty Friend, and his best beloved. While the men of this world are vexing their spirits, and fretting under present disappointments, he dwells in a lonesome corner, mourning for his sins and follies. And at another time, while the children of vanity grow proud in public, and boast of their large possessions, and inheritances, he rejoices in secret, in the hope of glory, and takes divine delight in the fore-thought of his better inheritance among the saints: his conversation is in heaven; *Phil.* iii. 20.

I might run through all the exercises of the sanctified affections, and the various parts of the divine worship, and of the conduct of a saint among the children of men. With what humble fear does he entertain the mention of the name of God! With what deep self-abasement, and inward adoration! At the presence of sin how is his anger stirred! and his holy watchfulness when temptations appear! how does he labour and wrestle, fight and strive, lest he be overcome by the secret enemies of his soul! And as his bitterness of heart is unknown to the world, so *a stranger intermeddles not with his joy;* Prov. xiv. 10. He feeds on the same provision which his Lord Jesus did on earth, for it is his meat and his drink to do the will of his Father which is in heaven: This is a feast to the christian, which the world knows not of; *John* iv. 32, 34.

II. The springs and principles of this life are hidden and unknown to the world; and therefore the world esteems many of the actions of a true christian very strange and unaccountable things, as we shall shew afterward, because they see not the springs of them.

The word of God, or the gospel, with all the hidden treasures of it, is the chief instrument, or means, whereby this divine life is wrought and supported in the soul.

The true christian beholds the purity of God in the precepts; he reads grace, heaven, and glory, in the promises; he sees the words of the bible in a divine light, and feeds sweetly on the hidden blessings of scripture, deriving life, and nourishment, and joy from it; whereas the carnal world go not far beyond the letters and syllables. The gospel, which is all light and glory to a saint, is hidden to them that are lost; 2 *Cor.* iv. 3. This same gospel is written in the heart of a Christian, and is the principle of his life there. This is immortal and incorruptible, the seed of the word abiding in the heart; the image of the eternal God, drawn out in such characters as our nature can bear: For the written word is a transcript of God's holiness; and when it is inwrought into all the powers of a believing soul, it becomes a vital principle within him for ever. A believer is, as it were, cast in the very mould of the gospel; so the word signifies; *Rom.* vi. 17. This is the word hidden in the heart, that secures the saint from sin; *Psal.* cxix. 11.

The motives and springs that awaken a christian to keep up, and maintain this spiritual life, are things hidden from the eyes of the world; things eternal and invisible; 2 Cor. iv. 18. *While we look not at the things that are seen, that are temporal; but at the things that are unseen, and eternal;* we then count the joys or sorrows of this world, things of little importance; then we live like christians, and the life of our Lord Jesus is manifested, or copied out, in our lives; as *ver.* 10, 11.

The habits of grace and holiness in the hearts of believers, whence all the actions of the spiritual life proceed, are secret and hidden. Who knows how they were wrought at first? how this heavenly breath, this divine life was infused, which changed a dead sinner into a living saint? Our Saviour himself compares this work of the Spirit to the wind; John iii. 8. *We hear the sound,* we feel and see the effects of it, *but we know not whence it comes, nor whither it goes; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.* Who can describe those secret and almighty influences of the blessed Spirit on the mind and will of man, which work with such a sovereign, and yet such a gentle, and con-natural agency, that the believer himself hardly knows it, but by the gracious effects of it, and the blessed alterations wrought in his soul?

It is this glorious Agent, this Creator, this blessed Spirit, who is the uncreated principle of this life. The Spirit, as proceeding from our Lord Jesus Christ, begun this life at first in the soul: and the same glorious unseen power carries it on through all difficulties and oppositions, and will fulfil it in glory.

I must add also, that Christ himself, who is said to be our life in the verse following my text, is at present hidden from us; he dwells in the unseen world, and the heavens must receive him till the restitution of all things; *Acts* iii. 21. Christ Jesus is the bread from heaven; *John* vi. 32, 33. by which the believer is nourished; he is the hidden manna, the divine food of souls: it is upon him the christian lives daily and hourly; it is upon the blood of the Lamb, which is carried up to the mercy-seat, that the believer lives for pardon and peace with God: It is upon the righteousness of his Lord and Head, that he lives for his everlasting acceptance before the throne; it is upon the grace and strength of Christ, that he rests and depends all the day, when he is called forth to encounter the boldest temptations, to fulfil the most difficult duties, or to sustain the heaviest strokes of a painful providence. "*Surely,* saith the saint, *in the Lord alone have I righteousness and strength;* Isaiah xlv. 24. In the Lord my Saviour, whom the world sees not; but I see him by the eye of faith."

I shall enlarge farther on this subject under the second doctrine.

Thus, whether we consider the spiritual acts and exercises of this christian life, or the springs and principles of it, still we shall find it has just reason to be called a secret, or a hidden life.

Before I proceed, I shall lay down these two cautions:

1st Caution. Though it is a hidden life, yet I entreat my christian friends, tha they would not suffer it to be such a secret, as to be unknown to themselves. God has ordained it to be hidden, not that it might always be unknown to you, but that you might search after it with diligence; and that when you find yourselves possessed of it, you might rejoice in the evidences of your life and his love. Be not satisfied then, O ye professors of the gospel! until you have searched and found this divine life within you. What a poor life must that christian live who goes from day to day, and from year to year, and still complains, I know not whether I am alive or no!

Labour, therefore, after self-acquaintance, since God has been pleased in his word, to furnish us with sufficient means to find out our estate; 1 *John* v. 17. These things I write unto you, says the apostle, that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God, and that ye may know that ye believe. It is a dishonour to the gospel of Christ, to abide always in darkness and doubtings, and to rest contented in so uncomfortable a frame. We are told in *Rev.* ii. 17. that those whose life is supported by this hidden manna, have also a white stone given them, with a new name in it, which no man knows, save he that receives it; that is, they have divine absolution and pardon of their sins, which was represented heretofore, in some courts of judicature, by the gift of a white stone; but surely, if my own name were written in it, I would use my utmost endeavours to read the inscription myself, though it may be a secret to the rest of mankind; then my God and Saviour shall have the honour of his pardoning love, and then my soul shall enjoy the consolation.

2d Caution. Though it be a hidden life in the sacred operations and the springs of it, yet the world ought to see the blessed effects of it. We must *hold forth* to men *the word of life:* Phil. ii. 16. Let the world see that we live to God, and that by the secret power of his word in the gospel.

The christian life is no fantastic and visionary matter, that consists in warm imaginations, and pretences to inward light and rapture; it is a real change of heart and practice, from sin to holiness, and a turn of soul from earth toward heaven. It has been dressed up, indeed, like enthusiastic foolery, by the impious wits of men, and painted for a subject of ridicule and reproach. Thus the saints and holy martyrs have been clad in a fool's coat, or a bear's skin, but they are still men, and wise men too; they have been dressed up like devils, but they are still the sons of God. So secret piety has solid reason and scripture still on its side, whatever silly scandals have been cast upon it; there is no cause, therefore, to be ashamed of professing it. There is nothing in all the christian life, that a man needs to blush at. *We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty*, knavery, and uncleanness, when we began to be christians; 2 *Cor.* iv. 2. It is our glory that we are alive to God, and we should be ashamed of nothing that either exercises or maintains this life. None of the duties of worship, none of the practices of godliness, that render religion honourable among men, and

make God our Saviour appear glorious in the world, should be neglected by us, whenever we are called to practise or profess them.

The effects of this hidden life should not all be secret, though the springs of it are so; for christians are commanded to make their *light shine before men, that others may glorify their Father which is in heaven;* Matt. v. 14, 15. 16. The lights of the world must not place themselves under a bushel, and be contented to shine there useless and alone; we must give honour to God in public. And though we are commanded to practise such secrecy and self-denial in our deeds of charity, as may secure us from all ostentation and pride, yet we must sometimes make it appear too, that we do good to men, that christianity may have the glory of it. We must feed the hungry, we must clothe the naked, we must love all men, even our enemies, and discover to the world that we are christians, by noble and sublime practices of every virtue and every duty, as far as it is possible, even by the best works, to discover inward religion.

This sermon may be divided here.

I proceed now to draw some inferences from the hidden nature of the spiritual life.

I. And my first inference would teach you not to rest satisfied with any externals: for they who put forth no other acts of life, but what the world sees, are no true christians.

We eat, we drink, and sleep; that is the life of nature; we buy and sell, we labour and converse; that is the civil life; we trifle, visit, tattle, flutter, and rove among a hundred impertinences, without any formed, or settled design what we live for; that is the idle life; and it is the kindest name that I can bestow upon it. We learn our creed, we go to church, we say our prayers, and read chapters or sermons; these are the outward forms of the religious life. And is this all? Have we no daily secret exercises of the soul in retirement and converse with God? No time spent with our own hearts? Are we never busied, in some hidden corner, about the affairs of eternity? Are there no seasons allotted for prayer, for meditation; for reading in secret, and self-enquiries? Nothing to do with God alone in a whole day together? Surely this can never be the life of a christian?

Remember, O man, there is nothing of all the labours or services, the acts of zeal or devotion, that thou canst practise in public, but a subtle hypocrite may so nearly imitate the same, that it will be hard to discover the difference. There is nothing of all these outward forms, therefore, that can safely and infallibly distinguish thee from a hypocrite and false professor; for the same actions may proceed from inward motions and principles widely different. If you would obtain any evidence that you are a christian indeed, you must make it appear to your own conscience by the exercises of the hidden life, and the secret transactions between God and your soul. He was not a Jew of old, who was one outwardly in the letter only; nor is he a christian, who has mere outward forms; but a Jew or a christian, in the sight of God, is such a one as hath the religion in his heart, and in spirit, *whose praise is not of men, but of God;* Rom. ii. 28, 29.

II. Inference. The life of a saint is a matter of wonder to the sinful world; for they know not what he lives upon. The sons of ambition follow after grandeur and power; the animals of pleasure pursue all the luxuries of sense; the miser hunts after money, and is ever digging for gold. It is visible enough what these

wise men live upon. But the christian, who lives in the power and glory of the divine life, seeks after none of these, any farther than as duty leads him, and the supports and conveniencies of life are needful, in the present state of his habitation in the flesh. The sinner wonders what it is the saint aims at, while he neglects the tempting idols that himself adores, and despises the gilded vanities of a court, and abhors the guilty scenes of a voluptuous life. Christ and his children are, and will be, signs and wonders to the age they live in; *Isaiah* viii. 18. compared with *Heb.* ii. 13.

The men of this world wonder what a christian can have to say to God in so many retiring hours as he appoints for that end; what strange business he can employ himself in; how he can lay out so much time in affairs, which the carnal mind has no notion of. On the other hand, the saint, when he is in a lively frame, thinks that all the intervals of his civil life, and all the vacant seasons that he can find between the necessary duties of his worldly station, are all little enough to transact affairs of such awful importance as he has to do with God, and little enough to enjoy those secret pleasures, which the stranger is unacquainted with. The children of God pray to their heavenly Father in secret, and they feel unknown refreshment and delight in it; and they are well assured, that *their Father who seeth in secret will hereafter reward them openly;* Matt. vi. 6.

It is no wonder, that the profane world reproaches true christians as dull, lifeless creatures, animals that have neither soul nor spirit in them, because they do not see them run to the same excess in things of the lower life. Alas! they know not that the life of a christian is on high; they see it not, for it is hidden; and therefore they wonder we are not busily engaged in the same practices and pursuits as they are; 1 *Pet.* iv. 4. *They think it strange that we run not to the same excess of riot.* The world sees nothing of our inward labour and strife against flesh and self, our sacred contest for the prize of glory; they know nothing of our earnest enquiries after an absent God, and a hidden Saviour; and least of all do they know the holy joys, and retired pleasures of a christian, because these are things which are seldom communicated to others; and therefore the world grows bold to call religion a melancholy thing, and the christian a mere mope. But the soul who lives above, who lives within sight of the world of invisibles, can despise the reproach of sinners.

III. Inference. See the reason why christians have not their passions so much engaged in things of this life as other men have, because their chief concern is about their better life, which is hidden and unseen. They can look upon fine equipages, gay clothes, and rich appearances in the world, without envy; they can survey large estates, and see many thousands gotten in haste by those that resolve to be rich, and yet not let loose one covetous wish upon them; they have a God whom they worship in secret, and trust his blessing to make them sufficiently rich in the way of diligence in their stations: they hope they shall have blessings mingled with their mean estate, and no sorrows added to their wealth.

They can find themselves exalted by providence to high stations in the world, and not be puffed up in countenance, nor swell at heart. If they are but watchful to keep their divine life vigorous they will distinguish themselves as christians, even in scarlet and gold, and that by a glorious humility. They know that all their advancements on earth are but mean and despicable things, in comparison of their

highest hopes, and their promised crown in heaven. They can meet threatening dangers, diseases, and deaths, without those terrors that overwhelm the carnal sinner; for their better life shall never die. They can sustain losses, and sink in the world, when it comes by the mere providence of God, without their own culpable folly, and bear it with a humble resignation of spirit, and with much inward serenity and peace; for the things which they have lost, were not their life; all these were visible, but their life is hidden; *Phil.* iv. 12. I know how to be abased, and how to be exalted; I know how to abound, and to suffer want; I can do all these things through Christ strengthening me: Christ, who is the principle of my inward life. O! that the christians of our day had more of this sublime conduct, more of these noble evidences of the life of christianity.

IV. Inference. How vain and needless a thing is it for a christian to affect popularity, and to set up for a shew in this world. How vain is it for him to be impatient to appear and shine among men, for he has honours and treasures, joys and glories, that are incomparably greater, and yet a secret to the world. A christian's true life is hidden, and he should not be too fond of public and gay appearances.

The apostle Peter gives advice how the christian women should behave themselves not as the rest of the world do, who set themselves forth to public shew, with many ornaments of gold and pearl; but the believer should adorn herself with modesty, and with every grace, in *the hidden man of the heart;* 1 Pet. iii. 4.

How unreasonable is it for us who profess the christian life to be cast down, if we are confined to an obscure station in the world! Was not the Lord of glory, when he came down on earth to give us a pattern of the spiritual life, content to be obscure for thirty years together? Was he not unknown to men, but as a common carpenter, or a poor carpenter's son? And in those four years of appearance which he made as a preacher, how mean, how contemptible were the circumstances of life which he chose? And shall we be impatient and fretful under the same humbled estate? Do we dislike so divine a precedent? Must we, like mushrooms of the earth, be exalted, and grow fond of making a public figure, when the King of heaven was so poor and lowly; We lose public honour and applause indeed, but perhaps our hidden life thrives the better for it, when we resist the charms of grandeur.

Besides, this is not a christian's time for appearing, whilst Christ himself is absent and unseen. The believer's shining-time is not yet come; but the marriage-day of the Lamb is hastening, and the bride is making herself ready. The general resurrection is our great shining-day: *When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory;* Col. iii. 4. and the christian is content to stay for his robes of light, and his public honours, till the dawn of that glorious morning. Nor shall we dare to be censorious of those who make a poor figure, and but mean appearance in the world; perhaps they are some of Christ's hidden ones; they promise but little, and shew but little, either wit or parts, prudence or power, skill or influence; and perhaps they have but little too; but they know God, they trust in Christ, they live a divine life, and have glorious communications from heaven in secret daily, they make daily visits to the court of glory, and are visited by condescending grace. You see in all these instances, that popularity and shew are not at all necessary for a christian.

V. Inference. How exceeding difficult is it for those who are exalted to great and public stations in the world to maintain lively christianity! They have need of great and uncommon degrees of grace to maintain this hidden life. *How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!* These are our Saviour's own words; *Mark* x. 23. and he gave this reason for it, *ver.* 24, because it is so hard for those that have riches, not to trust in them, not to live entirely upon them, and make them their very life.

How hard is it for men in high posts of honour, to take due care that their graces thrive, while they are all day engaged, either in the fatigues of office, in state and pomp of their own, or in everlasting attendances on the will of some superior; so that they have few moments in a day, wherein they are capable of retiring, and holding any converse with themselves or with heaven. But O! how pleasant is it to such as are advanced in the providence of God, and have a value for their hidden life, to steal an hour of retirement from the burden of their public cares! How sweet is the recovery of a few minutes, and how well filled up with active devotion! The secret life of a christian grows much in the closet, and without a retreat from the world it cannot grow. Abandon the secret chamber, and the spiritual life will decay: Doubtless many of you can witness that you have found it so; and your own mournful experience echoes to the words of our ministry in this point.

There was an ancient philosopher, who, when he had lost his riches in a storm at sea, gave thanks to providence, under a heathen name; "I thank thee, fortune, that hast now forced me to retire, and to live within my cloak;" that is, upon the supports of philosophy, in meaner circumstances of life. How much more should the christian be pleased with a private station, who has the supports of the gospel to live upon, and to sweeten his retirements! How cautious should christians be, therefore, of the management of all the public affairs of their civil life, lest they do any that should hurt their secret or religious life! We should be still enquiring, "Will such sort of company to which I am now invited; such a gainful trade which I am ready to engage in; such a course of life which now lies before me; tempt me to neglect my secret converse with God? Does it begin to alienate my heart from heaven, and things unseen? then let me suspect and fear it." Be afraid, christians, of what grieves the blessed Spirit of Christ, who is the principle of your life, and may provoke him to retire from you. Be diligent in such enquiries, be very watchful and jealous of every thing that would call your thoughts outward, and keep them too long abroad. Christians should live much at home, for theirs is a hidden life.

VI. Inference. We may see here divine wisdom in contriving the ordinances of the gospel, with such plainness, and such simplicity, as best serves to promote the hidden life of a christian. Pomp and ceremony, gilded and sparkling ornaments, are ready to call the soul abroad, to employ it in the senses, and divert it from that spiritual improvement, which the secret life of a christian requires, and which gospel-institutions were designed for.

You see in the heathen world, and you see in popish countries, that the gay splendours of worship tempt the hearts of the worshippers to rest in forms, and to forget God; and we may fear that the greatest part of the people lay under the same danger in the days of Judaism. I grant indeed, that where pompous and glittering rites of religion are of special divine appointment, and were designed to typify the future glories of a more

spiritual church and worship; there they might hope for divine aids to lead their minds onward beyond the type, to those designed glories. But carnal worshippers are the bulk of any sect or profession. All mankind, by nature, is ready to take up with the forms of godliness, and neglect the secret power. We naturally pay too much reverence to shining formalities and empty shews. Set a christian to read the most spiritual parts of gospel, on one page of the bible, and let some scene of the history be finely graven, and painted on the opposite side: his holy meditations will be endangered by his eyes, fair figures and colours attract the sight, and tempt the soul off from refined devotion.

I cannot think it any advantage to christian worship, to have churches well adorned by the statuary and the painter; nor can gay altar-pieces improve the communion service. While gaudy glittering images attract and entertain the outward sense, the soul is too much attached to the animal, to keep itself at a distance; while the sight is regaled and feasted, the sermon runs to waste, and the hidden life withers and starves. When the ear is soothed with a variety of fine harmony, the soul is too often allured away from spiritual worship, even though a divine song attend the music. Our Saviour therefore, in much wisdom, and in much mercy, has appointed blessed ordinances for his church, with such plainness and simplicity, as may administer most support and nourishment to the secret life.

Thus I have finished the remarks on the hidden life of a christian, considered as to its spiritual exercises in this present world.

I proceed to consider, in what respects this life is hidden, as it is more usually called eternal life, or to be exercised and enjoyed in heaven.

And here we must confess, that we are much at a loss to say any thing more than the scripture hath said before us. *Life and immortality*, indeed, *are brought to light by the gospel of Christ*, in far brighter measures than the former ages and dispensations were acquainted with; 1 *Tim.* i. 10. But still, what the apostle says concerning all the blessings of the gospel, we may repeat emphatically concerning heaven, that eye hath not seen, that ear hath not heard, that it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive; nor indeed hath God himself revealed but a very small part of the things he hath prepared, in the future world, for them that love him; 1 *Cor.* ix. 10. *It doth not yet appear what we shall be;* the glory of that state is yet a great secret to us; 1 *John* iii. 2. We know much better what it is not, than what it is: we can define it best by negatives. Absent from the weaknesses, sins, and sorrows of this life, is our best and largest account of it, whether we speak of the separate state, or the heaven of the resurrection.

The veil of flesh and blood divides us from the world of spirits; we know not the manner of their life in the state of separation; we are at an utter loss as to their stations and residences; what relation they bear to any part of this material creation; whether they dwell in thin airy vehicles, and are inhabitants of some starry world, or planetary regions; or whether they subsist in their pure intellectual nature, and have nothing to do with any thing corporeal, till their dust be recalled to life. We are unacquainted with the laws by which they are governed, and the methods of their converse: we know little of the businesses they are employed in, those glorious services for their God and their Saviour, in which they are favoured with assistant angels; and little are we acquainted with their joys, which are unspeakable, and full of glory. The very language of that world, is neither to be spoken, nor understood by us; St. Paul heard some of the words of it, and had a faint glimpse of the sense of them; but he could not repeat

them again to mortal ears; nor had he power, nor leave, to tell us the meaning of them; 2 *Cor.* xii. 4. For *whether he was in the body, at that time, or out of the body,* he himself was not able to determine.

And as for the heaven of the resurrection; what sort of bodies shall be raised from the dust, for perfect spirits to dwell in, is as great a secret. A spiritual body is a mystery to the wisest divines and philosophers; where our habitation shall be, and what our special employment through the endless ages of immortality, are among the hidden unsearchables. The most that we know, is, that we shall be made like to Christ, and we shall be where he is, to behold his glory, 1 *John* iii. 2. and *John* xvii. 24.

If the eternal life of the saints be so much a secret at present, we may draw these two or three inferences from it.

I. Inference. How necessary is it for a christian to keep faith awake and lively, that he may maintain his acquaintance with the spiritual and unseen world! It is faith that converses with invisibles: *faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen;* Heb. xi. 1. It is faith that deals in hidden traffic, and grows rich in treasures that are out of sight. It is by faith in the Son of God, we live this spiritual life, by faith in an absent Saviour; *Gal.* ii. 20. *Whom having not seen, we love; and though we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice;* 1 Pet. i. 8. Let the christian, therefore, maintain a holy jealousy, lest too much converse with the things of sense, dull the eye of his faith, or weaken the hand of it. Let him put his faith into perpetual exercise, that he may live within the view of those glories that are hidden from sense; that he may keep his hold of eternal life; that he may support his hopes, and secure his joys. Until we can live by sight, let us *walk by faith;* 2 Cor. v. 7.

Though the life of heaven be hidden, yet so much of it is revealed as to give faith leave to lay hold of it; and yet not so much, as to make the hand of faith needless. It is brought down by our Lord Jesus Christ in the gospel, within the view of faith, that we might live in expectation of it, and be animated to the glorious pursuit; but it is not brought within the reach of sense, for we are now in a state of trial; and this is not the proper time nor place for sight and enjoyment.

II. Inference. How little is death to be dreaded by a believer, since it will bring the soul to the full possession of its hidden life in heaven! It is a dark valley that divides between this world and the next; but it is all a region of light and blessedness beyond it. We are now borderers on the eternal world, and we know but little of that invisible country. Approaching death opens the gates to us, and begins to give our holy curiosity some secret satisfaction; and yet how we shrink backward when that glorious unknown city is opening upon us! and are ready to beg and pray that the gates might be closed again: "O! for a little more time, a little longer continuance in this lower visible world!" This is the language of the fearful believer: but it is better to have our christian courage wrought up to a divine height, and to say, "*Open ye everlasting gates, and be ye lift up, O ye immortal doors,* that we may enter into the place where *the King of Glory is.*" There shall we see God, the great unknown, and rejoice in his overflowing love. We shall see him not as we do on earth, darkly, through the glass of ordinances; but inferior spirits shall converse with the supreme Spirit, as bodies do with bodies; that is, face to face; 1 *Cor.* xiii. 12.

There shall we behold Christ our Lord in the dignity of his character as Mediator, in the glory of his kingdom, and the all-sufficiency of his godhead; and we shall be for

ever with him. There shall we see millions of blessed spirits, who have lived the same hidden life as we do, and passed through this vale of tears, with the same attending difficulties and sorrows, and by the same divine assistances. They were unknown, and covered with dust as we are, while they dwelt in flesh, but they appear all-glorious and well-known in the world of spirits, and exult in open and immortal light: we shall see them, and we shall triumph with them in that day; we shall learn their language, and taste their joys: we shall be partakers of the same glory, which Christ our life diffuses all around him, on the blessed inhabitants of that intellectual world.

III. Inference. How glorious is the difference between the two parts of the christian's life, *viz.* the spiritual life on earth, and the perfection of eternal life in heaven; when all that is now hidden shall be revealed before men and angels!

Come now, and let us take occasion from this discourse, to let loose our meditations one stage beyond death and the separate state; even to the morning of the resurrection, and the full and public assembly of all the saints. O what an illustrious appearance! What a numerous and noble army of new creatures! Creatures that were hidden in this world among the common herd of mankind, and their bodies hidden in the grave, and mingled with common dust, rising all at once, at the sound of a trumpet, into public light and glory: the same persons, indeed, that once inhabited mortality, but in far different equipage and array. The christian, on earth, is like the rough diamond among the common pebbles of the shore; in the resurrection-day the diamond is cut and polished, and set in a tablet of gold. All that inward worth and lustre of holiness and grace, which are now hidden, shall be then visible and public before the eyes of the whole creation. Then the saints shall be known by their shining, *in the day when the Lord makes up his jewels;* Mal. iii. 17. When the spirits of the just made perfect in all the beauties of holiness, shall return to their former mansions, and become men again; when their bodies are raised from the dust, in the likeness of the body of our blessed Lord, how shall all the saints shine in the kingdom of their Father, though in the kingdoms of this world they were obscure and undistinguished! They shall appear, in that day, as the meridian sun breaking from a long and dark eclipse; and the sun is too bright a being to be unknown; *Matt.* xiii. 43.

What is there in a poor saint here, that discovers what he shall be hereafter? How mean his appearance now! how magnificent in that day! What was there in Lazarus on the dunghill, when the dogs licked his sores, that could lead us to any thought what he should be in the bosom of Abraham? What is there in the martyrs and confessors, described in *Heb.* xi. those holy men, with their sheep-skins, and their goat-skins upon them, wandering in deserts, and hidden in dens and caves of the earth? What was there in these poor and miserable spectacles that looks like a saint in glory? or that could give us any intimation what they shall be in the great rising day?

Now are we the sons of God, but *it does not yet appear what we shall be;* 1 John iii. 2. We can shew no pattern of it here below. Shall we go to the palaces of eastern princes, and borrow their crowns and sparkling attire, to shew how the saints are drest in heaven? Shall we take the marble pillars, their roofs of cedar, their costly furniture of purple and gold, to describe the mansions of immortality? Shall we attend the chariot of some Roman general, with all the ensigns of victory, leading on his legions to triumph, and fetch robes of honour, and branches of palm to describe that triumphant army of christian conquerors? The scripture makes use of these resemblances, indeed, in great con-

descension, to represent the glories of that day, because they are the brightest things we know on earth. But they sink as far below the splendours of the resurrection, as earth is below heaven, or time is shorter than eternity.

What is all the dead lustre of metals, and silks, and shining stones, to the living rays of divine grace, springing up, and shooting into full glory! Faith into sight, hope into enjoyment, patience into joy and victory, and love into its own perfection! Then all the hidden virtues and graces of the saints, shall appear like the stars at midnight, in an unclouded sky. Then shall it be made known to all the world, these were the men that wept and prayed in secret; it shall be published then in the great assembly, these were the persons who wrestled hard with their secret sins, that sought the face of God, and his strength in their private chambers, and they are made more than overcomers through him that hath loved them. The poor trembling christian who lived this hidden and divine life, but scarce knew it himself, nor durst appear among the churches on earth, shall lift up his head, and rejoice amidst the church triumphant; and the hidden seed of grace, that was watered with so many secret tears, shall spring up into a rich and illustrious harvest. This is the day which shall bring to light a thousand works of hidden piety, for the eternal honour of Christ and the saints; as well as the *hidden things of darkness*, to the sinners' everlasting confusion; *Matt.* xxv. and 1 *Cor.* iv. 5.

Thus the spiritual life of christians, which was concealed in this world, shall appear in the other in full brightness; and they themselves shall be amazed to see what divine honours, Jesus the Judge shall cast upon their poor secret services and sufferings.

But in what supreme glory shall their life display itself, when both parts of the human compound are rejoined after so long a separation! This is life eternal indeed, and joy unspeakable. How gloriously shall the perfections and honours, both of body and mind, unfold themselves, and rise far above all that they heard, or saw, or could conceive! Each of them surprized, like the queen of Sheba in the court of Solomon, shall confess with thankful astonishment and joy, that not one half of it was told them, even in the word of God. "And was this the crown, shall the christian say, for which I fought on earth at so poor and feeble a rate? And was this the prize for which I ran with a pace so slow and lazy? And were these the glories which I sought with so cold and indifferent a zeal in yonder world? O shameful indifference! O surprizing glories! O undeserved prize and crown! Had I imagined how bright the blessing was, which lay hidden in the promise, surely all my powers had been animated to a warmer pursuit. Could I have seen what I ought to have believed; had I but taken in all that was told me concerning this glorious and eternal life, surely I would have ventured through many deaths to secure the possession of it. O guilty negligence! and criminal unbelief! But thy sovereign mercy, O my God, has pardoned both, and made me possessor of the fair inheritance. Behold, I bow at thy feet for ever, and adore the riches of overflowing grace." *Amen.*

SERMON X.

THE HIDDEN LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN.

COL. iii. 3.

FOR YE ARE DEAD, AND YOUR LIFE IS HID WITH CHRIST IN GOD.

THE SECOND PART.

IT is to the christian converts who were at Colosse, that the apostle addresses himself, in this strange language: Ye are dead, and yet I tell you where your life is. This divine writer delights sometimes to surprize his readers, by joining such opposites, and uniting such distant extremes. But can a dead person have any life in him? Yes, and a noble one too, ye are dead to the world, and dead to sin, but ye have a life of another kind than that which belongs to the sinners of this world: your life is spiritual and holy; theirs is sinful, and engaged in the works of the flesh: your life is heavenly, and seeks the things which are above; theirs is derived from the earth, and grovels in the dust: your life is everlasting, for your souls shall live for ever in a glorious state, and your bodies shall be raised from death into equal immortality, and a partnership of the same glory; but their best life is only a temporal one, and when that is at an end, all their joys and their hopes are for ever at an end too, and their eternal sorrows begin.

But this life of a christian is a hidden life. That was the first doctrine I raised from the text. Both the operations and the springs of it, are a secret to the world, and the future glories of it, when it is most properly called eternal life, are still a greater secret, and much more unknown: Yet, saith the apostle, I can acquaint you where the springs of it lie, and whence all the future glories of it are to be derived; they are hidden in God, with our Lord Jesus Christ. Now by giving so short a hint, in a word or two, where this our life is hid, he has said something greater, and brighter, and more sublime, concerning it, than if he had shewn us, from a high mountain, at noon-day, all the kingdoms of this world, with all the dazzling glories of them, and then pointed downward, "there your life is."

Let this therefore be the second doctrine, and the subject of our present meditations, that the life of a christian is hidden with Christ in God. It is hidden in God, as the first original and eternal spring of it, and entrusted with Christ as a faithful Mediator; it is hid in God, where our Lord Jesus Christ is, and he is appointed to take care of it for us; for he also is called our life; *ver.* 4.

The method I shall take for the improvement of this truth, is, to explain these words of the apostle more at large, and then deduce some inferences from them.

The *first* enquiry will arise, in what respect the christian's life is said to be hidden in God? And,

Secondly, What is meant by its being hidden with Christ?

I. *First*, In what respect is the life of a christian said to be hidden in God?

The word GOD is taken in scripture, either in general for the divine nature, which is the same in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; or, in particular, for the person of the Father. And I do not see any absolute necessity to determine, precisely, which was the meaning of the apostle in this place. The three particulars by which I shall endeavour to explain it, will include both. The life of a christian is hidden in God; that is, in the all-sufficiency of the divine nature, in the purpose of the divine will, and in the secret engagements of the Father to his Son Jesus Christ, in the covenant of redemption.

1. The christian's life is hidden in the all-sufficiency of the divine nature. And there are immense stores of life, of every kind, hidden in God, in this sense. This whole world of beings, that have, and have not souls, with all the infinite varieties of the life of plants, animals, and angels, were hidden in this fruitful and inexhaustible fund of the divine all-sufficiency, before God began to create a world. All things were then hidden in God; for of him are all things, and from him all things proceeded; *Rom.* xi. 36. Now this all-sufficiency of God consists in those powers and perfections, whereby he is able to do all things for his creatures; and ready to do all for his saints; these are most eminently his wisdom, his almightiness, and his goodness.

There are inconceivable riches of goodness and grace in God, which are employed in furnishing out life for all his saints; and all the unknown preparations of future glory are the effects of his grace. *Eph.* ii. 4. *God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ;* and he did it for this purpose, *that in the ages to come, he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus:* ver. 7. Not all the goodness that appears in the rich provision he hath made for all the natural world of creatures, nor all the overflowing bounties of his providence, since the first creation, are equal to those unsearchable treasures of mercy and goodness, which he hath employed for the spiritual welfare, and eternal life and happiness of his own chosen children; and in the secret of this grace were all the blessings of his covenant hidden from eternity.

The divine wisdom is another part of his all-sufficiency. There are in God infinite varieties of thought and counsel, riches of knowledge, and wisdom unsearchable; and he hath made these abound in his new creation, as well as in the old; in the supernatural, as well as in the natural world. *Eph.* i. 8. *He hath abounded towards us,* sinners, in this work of salvation, *in all wisdom and prudence.* What surprizing wisdom appears in the vital powers of an animal, even in the life of brutes that perish! What glorious contrivance, and divine skill, to animate clay, and make a fly, a dog, or a lion of it! What sublime advances of wisdom to create a living man, and join these two distinct extremes, flesh and spirit, in such a vital union, that has puzzled the philosophers of all ages, and constrained some of them to confess and adore a God! And what a superior work of divinity, is it, to turn a dead sinner into a living saint, here on earth! and then to adorn a heaven, with all its proper furniture, for the eternal life and habitation of his sons and his daughters! What divine skill is required here! What immense profusion of wisdom, to form bodies of immortality and glory, for every saint, out of the dust of the grave, and the ashes of martyred christians! Our spiritual and our eternal life are hid in the wisdom of God.

The power of God is his all-sufficience too. The power that quickens and raises

a soul to this divine life, must be almighty; *Eph.* i. 19, 20. It is the same exceeding greatness of his power that works in us who believe, which wrought in our Lord Jesus Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right-hand in heavenly places. It is the same powerful word *that commanded the light to shine out of darkness, that shone into our hearts,* when he wrought the knowledge of Christ there; 2 *Cor.* iv. 6. and when he commanded us, who lay among the dead, to awake, and arise, and live. Was it not a noble instance of power, to spread abroad these heavens of unknown circumference, with all the rolling worlds of light in them, the planets and the stars? And the same hand is mighty enough, if these were not sufficient, to build a brighter heaven, fit for the saints to live in during all their immortality, and to furnish them with vital powers that shall be incorruptible and everlasting. Thus the life of the saints is hidden in the almightiness of God, as well as in his wisdom and goodness. Thus it is contained in the all-sufficience of the divine nature, and each part of it is ready to be produced into act, in every proper season.

2. The life of a christian is hidden in the purposes of the divine will. And in this sense, the whole gospel, with all its wondrous glories and mysteries, is said to be hid in God; *Eph.* iii. 9. When St. Paul preached *among the gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,* he made all men see something of that mystery, which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God. And if this be compared with *Eph.* i. 9. we shall find that this mystery of the will, or good-pleasure of God, was that which he eternally purposed in himself.

There is not one dead sinner awakened, and called into this divine and spiritual life here, or that shall ever be possessed of life eternal hereafter, but it was contained in the eternal secret purpose, and merciful design of God, before the world began. For it is a very mean conceit, and a disgraceful opinion concerning the great God, to imagine that he should exert his power to work life in souls, here in time, by any new purposes, or sudden designs, occasioned by any works or merit of theirs, which he had not formed and decreed in himself, long before he made man. This doctrine would represent God as a mutable being: but we know that he is unchangeable. There is nothing new in God; and his immutability is that perfection of his nature which secures the performance of this divine purpose, and the life of every christian.

3. I might add, in the third place, that the life of a christian is hidden in the unknown engagements of the Father to his Son Jesus Christ the Mediator. That sacred and divine transaction betwixt the Father and the Son, is often intimated in the holy scriptures, and some of the promises of that covenant are there represented; *Psal.* lxxxix. 19, 28, 29, 36, &c. *I have laid help upon one that is mighty; my mercy will I keep for him for ever, and my covenant shall stand fast with him: his seed will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.* Then when *the covenant of peace was between them both,* as it is expressed in *Zech.* vi. 13. then did the Father promise that he should have *a seed to serve him;* Psal. xxii. 30. and this must be a living seed, and they must be raised up from among dead sinners, and they shall be made living saints in the world of grace, and in the world of glory.

Many of these promises are transcribed as it were, into the covenant of grace, and they are written down in scripture for our present consolation and hope; and many others are, doubtless, concealed from all but Jesus the Mediator; they are hidden from men and angels, and reserved to be known, by surprizing accomplishment, in the

future bright ages, beyond the date of time, and to entertain the long successions of our eternity. Now the truth and faithfulness of God are those attributes of his nature which secure this covenant, and all the divine engagements of it; both those which are revealed to the children of men, and those that are known only to the Son and the Father: but it is sufficiently evident, that all the degrees and powers of the spiritual and eternal life of the saints, with all the graces, glories and blessings that shall ever attend them, are hidden and laid up in these sacred engagements and promises.

II. This leads me to the *second* enquiry; and that is, what is meant by these words, *with Christ*, in my text? and how the christian *life is hid with Christ?*

If I would branch this into three particulars also, I should express them thus:

1. Our life is hidden with Christ, as he is the great Treasurer and Dispenser of all divine benefits to the children of men. This is the high office to which the Father hath appointed him; and this is the character that he sustains; and he is abundantly furnished for the execution of this great trust. In this sense, all the stores of life and blessing, that ever shall be bestowed on the sinful race of Adam, are laid up in the hands of Christ, the Son of God.—*It hath pleased the Father, that in him all fulness should dwell;* Col. i. 19. And *he was full of grace and truth, that of his fulness we might receive grace for grace;* John i. 14, 16. That is, a variety of graces and blessings answerable to that rich variety, with which our Lord Jesus Christ, the high-treasurer of heaven, was furnished from the hand of the Father. And to this purpose, perhaps, *John* v. 26. may be interpreted, compared with *ver.* 21. *As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; that as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son may quicken whom he will.*

The blessed Spirit itself, as it is the great promise of the New Testament, and the glorious gift of God to men, was communicated to the Son, and by him bestowed upon us: for he went to heaven to receive the promise of the Spirit from the Father, and he shed it forth upon the apostles and the believers; *Acts* ii. 33. It is this Spirit who gave miraculous gifts to them heretofore, that is the immediate principle, or worker, of divine life in dead souls now, and it is by this same Spirit, that he shall raise our dead bodies from the grave; *Rom.* viii. 11. He is the spring of our spiritual and eternal life; and he is dispensed to us from the Father, by the hands of the Son.

And here it is proper to take notice of the special manner wherein the Lord Jesus Christ is the treasurer, or keeper of life, and all divine benefits for the saints, and becomes the dispenser thereof to his people: He is ordained to stand in the relation of a head to them, and they are his body, his members. Thus our life is hidden with Christ, as he is the vital head of all his saints. Their life is hid with Christ, as the spirits and springs of life, for all the members in the natural body are said to be contained in the head. *Christ is the head of his own mystical body;* Eph. iv. 14, 16. *from whom the whole body, fitly joined together,* maketh increase to its own edification: it is the same vital spirit that runs through head and members.—*He that is joined to the Lord, is one Spirit;* 1 Cor. vi. 17. and therefore partakes of the same life.

Thus you see, that though the life of a christian is hidden in God, in the all-sufficiency of his nature, and the purposes of his will; yet our Lord Jesus Christ, as Mediator, is entrusted to keep it for him, and dispense it to him.

2. Our life is hid with Christ, as he is our forerunner, and the possessor of life,

spiritual and eternal, in our name. And this may be described in a variety of instances, according to the various parts, as well as the several advancing degrees of our spiritual life, and the perfection of it in life eternal. When his human nature was first formed complete in holiness, it was a pledge and assurance, that we should one day be completely holy too; for, as is the head so must the members be. In the original sanctification of his Spirit, flesh, and blood, we may read the certain future sanctification of every believing soul, with its body too; see *John* xvii. 19. and *Heb.* ii. 11.

Again; when his body was raised from the dead, it was a pledge and pattern of our being raised from a death in sin, unto the spiritual life of a saint, as well as a certain assurance of the resurrection of our bodies into future glory. The first is evident from *Eph.* ii. 6. *When we were dead in sin, he hath quickened us together with Christ.* And Rom. vi. 4. *As Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we must also walk in newness of life; for we are planted in the likeness of his resurrection;* ver. 5. And in 1 *Cor.* xv. 12, &c. the apostle builds his whole argument of the resurrection of the bodies of saints who are dead, from the rising of our Lord Jesus Christ out of his grave: *for Christ being risen from the dead;* ver. 20. *is become the first-fruits of them that slept.* And as all that are united to Adam, by having him for their head must die; so all who are one with Christ, and have him for their head, shall be made alive; which seems to be the meaning of the 22d verse: *As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

When he ascended into the heavens, it was not merely in his own name, but in ours too, to take possession of the inheritance for the saints in light. *Heb.* vi. 20. Our hope enters within the vail, whither Jesus the forerunner is for us entered. And when he sat down at the right-hand of God in the heavenly places, it was as the great exemplar of our future advancement, and thereby gave us assurance, that we should sit down there too: and therefore the apostle, in the language of faith, anticipates these divine honours, and applies them to the Ephesians beforehand: *God hath raised us up together*, says he, *with Christ, and hath made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*

It was *through the blood of the everlasting covenant*, that Jesus *the great Shepherd of the sheep, was brought again from the dead;* and it was *the God of peace* who raised him; *Heb.* xiii. 20. And it is by virtue of his own blood, and righteousness, that he, who once took our sins upon him, is now discharged: It is through his own sufferings that he appears with acceptance before the throne, and enjoys a divine life in the unchangeable favour of God; and all this as our head, surety, and representative, giving us assurance hereby, that we, through the blood of the same covenant, shall be brought again from the dead too; that we through the virtue of the same righteousness, and all-sufficiency of the same sacrifice, shall appear hereafter before God in glory, and stand in his eternal favour; and as an earnest of it, we enjoy a life of holy peace and acceptance with God in this world, through the same all-sufficient blood and righteousness: for he *appears in the holy of holies, in* heaven itself, *in the presence of God for us;* Heb. ix. 24. He secures all the glories and blessings of spiritual and eternal life for us, as he has taken possession of them in our name.

3. Our life of grace, and especially our life of glory, may be said to be hidden with Christ, because he dwells in heaven, where God resides in glory; God, in whom is our life. He is set down on the right-hand of the Majesty on high; *Heb.* xii. 2. There our eternal life is. The things which are above, are the objects of our joyful hope, *where*

Christ is at the right-hand of God; Col. iii. 1. It is the short, but sublime description of our heaven, that we shall be *present with the Lord*, we shall be where Christ is, to *behold his glory;* 2 Cor. v. 8. and *John* xvii. 24. And shall possess all that unknown and rich variety of blessings which are reserved for us in heavenly places, whither Christ our Lord is ascended. Thus I have endeavoured to explain, in the largest and most comprehensive sense, what we are to understand by the life of a christian hidden with Christ in God: it is reserved in the all-sufficiency, the purposes, and the engagements of God, under the care of the Mediator, and in the presence of Christ.

This Sermon may be divided here.

The use I shall make of this doctrine, is, to draw four inferences from it for our instruction, and three for our consolation.

The inferences for our instruction are such as these:

Ist. Instruction. What a glorious person is the poorest, meanest christian! He lives by communion with God the Father and the Son; for his life is hid with Christ in God; 1 *John* i. 3.—*Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full;* the joy that you may justly derive from so glorious an advancement.

A true christian does not live upon the creatures, but upon the infinite and almighty Creator; upon God who created all things by Jesus Christ. Created beings were never designed to be his life and his happiness; they are too mean and coarse a fare for a christian to feed upon, in order to support his best life: He converses with them indeed, and transacts many affairs that relate to them in this lower world: while he dwells in flesh and blood, his heavenly Father has appointed these to be a great part of his business; but he does not make them his portion and his life. They possess but the lower degrees of his affection: He rejoices in the possession of them, as though he rejoiced not; and he weeps for the loss of them, as though he wept not: He enjoys the dearest comforts of life, as though he had them not; and buys with such a holy indifference, as though he were not to possess; 1 *Cor.* vii. 29, 30. for the fashion of them passes away: but the food of his life is infinite and immortal. It is no wonder that a man of this world lets loose all the powers of his soul in the pursuit and enjoyment of creatures, for they are his portion and his life. But it is quite otherwise with a christian; he has a nobler original, and sustains a higher character: his divine life must have divine food to support it.

Let our thoughts take a turn to some bare common, or to the side of a wood, and visit the humble christian there; we shall find him chearful, perhaps, at his dinner of herbs, with all the circumstances of meanness around him: but what a glorious life he leads in that straw-cottage, and poor obscurity! The great and gay world shut him out from them with disdain: He lives, as it were, hidden in a cave of the earth; but the godhead dwells with him there. The high and lofty one that inhabits eternity, comes down to dwell with the humble and contrite soul; *Isa.* lvii. 15. God, who is the spring of life, comes down to communicate fresh supplies of this life continually. *He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God;* 1 John iv. 16. He is not alone, for the Father is with him; *John* xvi. 32. The Father and the Son come and manifest themselves unto him, within the walls of that hovel, in so divine a manner, as they never do to the men of this world,

in their robes and palaces; *John* xiv. 22, 23. And that he may have the honour of the presence of the blessed Trinity, his *body is the temple of the Holy Ghost;* 1 Cor. iii. 16. and vi. 19. O! the wonderful condescensions of divine grace, and the surprizing honours that are done to a humble saint! How is this habitation graced! Heaven is there, for God and Christ are there; and who knows what heavenly guards surround him? What flights of attending angels? *Are they not all ministering spirits, sent down to minister unto them that shall be heirs of salvation?* Heb. i. 14. But our Lord Jesus Christ is now unseen, God and angels are unseen; the christian's company belong to the invisible world: he lives a hidden, but a divine life; his life is hid with Christ in God.

IId Instruction. See how it comes to pass that christians are capable of doing such wonders, at which the world stands amazed. The spring of their life is almighty; it is hid in God. It is by this divine strength they subdue their sinful natures, their stubborn appetites, and their old corrupt affections: it is by the power of God, derived through Jesus Christ, they bend the powers of their souls unto a conformity to all the laws of God and grace; and they yield their bodies as instruments to the same holy service, while the world wonders at them, that they should fight against their own nature, and be able to overcome it too.

And as they deny themselves, in all the alluring instances of sinful pleasure, under the influence of almighty grace, so they endure sufferings, in the sharpest degree, from the hands of God, without murmuring. And when they have laboured night and day, and performed surprizing services for God in the world, they are yet contented to submit to smarting and heavy trials from the hands of their heavenly Father, without being angry at their God; they know he loves them, and he designs all things shall work together for their good.

Besides all this, they bear dreadful persecutions, cruel mockings, and scourgings, and tortures, from the hands of men, and go through all the sorrows of martyrdom. What noble instances and miracles of this kind did the primitive age furnish us with, so that their tormentors were amazed! They saw not the secret springs of divine life which supported them; they knew not the grace of God, and the power of Christ, by which the christians were upheld in all their labours and their sufferings. The spring of their life was almighty, but it was hidden from the eyes of men: it was concealed and reserved with Christ in God.

Read the labours and the sufferings of St. Paul; 2 Cor. xi. 23. *In stripes above measure, in prisons frequent, in deaths often:* he was beaten with rods, he was stoned, he suffered shipwreck, in perpetual perils by land and sea, in weariness, in painfulness, in watchings and fastings, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness. One would think his bones were iron, and his flesh were brass. He was invisibly supported by Christ the spring of his life. Read his wonderous virtues and self-denial; *Phil.* iv. 11, 12, 13. I know how to be abased, and how to abound; I can be full, and be hungry; I can possess plenty, and I can suffer want: I can do all things through Christ strengthening me. This was the fountain of his life and strength. I acknowledge, says he, in another place, that I am nothing, I have no sufficiency of myself to think so much as one good thought: But all my sufficiency is of God, in whom my life is hid; 2 *Cor.* iii. 5. And with what a devout zeal does he ascribe his life to Christ, in that glorious amassment of spiritual paradoxes! Gal. ii. 20. *I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet, not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of*

the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. Therefore I can be delivered to death daily for Jesus Christ's sake; *troubled and perplexed,* and *yet not in despair; be cast down, and not be destroyed;* because I believe that the life of Jesus must be made manifest in my mortal flesh, and he which raised up the *Lord Jesus, shall raise us up also by Jesus, and shall present us with you;* 2 Cor. 14.

IIId Instruction. See whither a dead sinner must go to attain spiritual and eternal life, and whither a decaying dying christian must go for the recruit of his fainting life too: it is to God by Jesus Christ, for it is all hidden with Christ in God.

In vain shall a man who is dead in trespasses and sins, toil and labour, and hope to attain life any other way. God is the spring of all life, and he has betrusted it to the hands of Jesus Christ: *I am the way, the truth, and the life,* says our Saviour; *John* xiv. 6. No man can have life without coming to the living Father; and no man cometh to the Father but by me. Seneca and Plato, with their moral lectures, and the writings of human philosophy, may give a man new garments, may make his outward life appear much better than before; they may teach him, in some measure, to govern his passions too, and subdue some of the fleshly appetites; but they cannot raise him to the love of God, to the hatred of every sin, to the well-grounded hopes of the favour of God, the blessed expectation of a holy immortality, and a preparation for heaven. They cannot give the man a new life: he must be born again of the Spirit of Christ, or he can never become a living christian.

And in vain would the poor backsliding christian, with his withering decaying graces, recruit and renew his divine life, without applying himself afresh to Jesus Christ: while he forgets Christ, he must go on to wither and decay still. There is nothing in earth or heaven can supply the utter absence of our Lord Jesus Christ. When the stream of spiritual life ebbs or runs low, it is not to be quickened, recovered, and increased, but by new supplies from the fountain which is on high. Remember, O degenerate christian, remember whence it was you derived your first life, when you were once dead in trespasses and sins; fly to the Saviour by new exercises of faith and dependence, mourning, in all humility, for your unwatchful walking, and your absence from the Lord. Commit your soul afresh to his care, exert your utmost powers, and beg of him renewed instances of the living Spirit, that the face of your soul may be like a watered garden, and the beauty of the divine life may be recovered again.

IVth Instruction. See the reason why a lively christian desires and delights to be so much, and so often, where God and Christ are; for his life is with them.

This was the divine temper and practice of the saints under a much darker dispensation than what we enjoy. How does the holy soul of David pant and long for the presence of God! and he brings even his animal nature, the very ferments of his flesh and blood, into his devotions; Psal. lxiii. 1. *My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee.* Psal. lxxxiv. 2. *My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.* In all the various and fervent language of sacred passion and transport, he breathes after God, who is the strength of his life and his salvation; *Psal.* xxvii. 1. The Jewish saints *cleaved* to the Lord, *for he was their life, and the length of their days;* Deut. xxx. 20.

And what sweet delight does St. Paul take in mentioning the very name of Christ! How does he dwell upon it in long sentences, and loves to repeat the blessed sound! How often does he rejoice in the hope of dwelling with him hereafter, and persuades the

Colossians, in this context, to be much with him here; *ver.* 1. If ye are risen with Christ, and have derived a quickening virtue from him to work a divine life in you, let your affections ascend above, where Christ your life is.

Is not a man, whose very soul and life is wrapped up in honour and ambition, desirous ever to be near the court? His life flourishes under the sunshine of the prince's eye, and therefore he would fain dwell there. Does not the covetous wretch love to be near his hoards of gold or silver? He has put up his life in his bags, among his treasures, and he is not willing to be far distant, nor long separated from them. Whatever a man lives upon, he would willingly be ever near it, that so he may have the pleasure of feeding upon what is his greatest delight, and be refreshed and nourished by that which he feels to support him. Now, what honour is to the ambitious, what money is to the covetous, what all the various delights of sense are to the men of carnal pleasure; that is God to the saint, that is Christ Jesus to the christian; and therefore he is ever desirous of such further manifestations of God and Christ, that may invigorate his spiritual life, and give him the pleasing relish of living. Then a man feels that he lives, when he is near to the spring of his life, and derives fresh supplies from it every moment.

Thence it is, that in every distress or danger, the saints fly to God for refuge and relief: He is their great *hiding-place;* Psalm xxxii. 7. And Christ Jesus is represented in prophecy under the same character; *Isa.* xxxii. 2. This man, in whom the *godhead dwells bodily*, shall be a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest. The name of God in Christ, *is a strong tower; the righteous run into it,* to hide themselves, *and are safe;* Prov. xviii. 10. Their life is in God, in the keeping of Christ, and they can defy deaths and dangers, when their faith is strong, and their thoughts are fixed above.

They know the meaning of that tender and divine language; Isa. xxvi. 20. *Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.* In a time of public terror, and spreading desolation, they retire to their secret places of converse with God, and are secured, at least from the terror, if not from the destruction too. When the arrows of death fly thick around them by day, and the pestilence walks through the streets in darkness, when a thousand fall at their side, and ten thousand at their right-hand, they make the Lord their refuge, even the most high their habitation, and dwell at ease in his secret place. He covers them from evil, or he gives them courage, so that they are not afraid: they place themselves under the protection of his name; they find shelter in his attributes: these are their secret chambers; they hide within the curtains of his covenant, they wrap their souls, as it were, in a sheet, or rather in a volume of promises;* that ancient volume that has secured the saints in all ages; and though death be near them, they know that their better life is safe: he gives his angels charge over them, to keep them on earth, or to bear them up to heaven, where their life is; *Psal.* xci. 11, 12.

Thence it comes to pass that we see christians, searching after God in ordinances and seeking for the Lord Jesus Christ in sermons, in prayers, in the closet, and in the sanctuary; for they live upon him. A holy soul pursues after the presence of his God, and his Saviour, with the same zeal of affection and fervent desire, that the men of this world indulge in their pursuit of created good: *My soul followeth hard after thee;* Psalm lxiii. 8. Carnal persons are contented to be absent from God, for he is not their life:

* The Bible, of old, was written on several sheets of parchment tacked together, and rolled up in a volume.

they can satisfy themselves with a shew of religion, without the power of it; and with empty forms of ordinances, without Christ in them, because they are not born again, their life is not spiritual. The sinner lives upon visible creatures, and these awaken his warmest affections. A saint lives upon hidden and invisible things, upon the hopes of futurity, and upon the glories that are concealed in the promises: he lives upon the righteousness and the intercession of Jesus his Mediator, upon the strength and grace of Christ, who is his head in heaven; upon the word, the promise, and the all-sufficiency of a God; and therefore these are objects of his meditation and his desire.

I proceed now to the three inferences for our consolation.

Ist Consolation. If our life be hidden with God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, then it is in safe hands. The wisdom and mercy of God have joined together, to appoint, shall I say, such a secret repository for our spiritual life, that it might be for ever secure. What can we have, or what can we desire more for the safety of our best life, than that God himself should undertake to reserve it in himself for us, and appoint his own eternal Son, in our nature, to be the great Trustee and Surety, for his exhibition of it in every proper season?

Our original life was hid in the first Adam; it was intrusted with man, poor, feeble, inconstant man, and he lost it: He was of *the earth, earthy*, and our life with him goes down to the dust. Our new life is intrusted with Christ; it is hidden in God, who is almighty and unchangeable: and therefore it can never be lost. The second Adam is *the Lord from heaven*, a quickening Spirit; 1 *Cor.* xv. 45, &c. And *he that believeth on him, though he were dead in* nature, *yet shall he live* by grace, for *Christ is the resurrection and the life:* And if he be once made spiritually alive by Christ, he shall live for ever. This is the language of Christ himself; *John* xi. 25, 26.

What an unreasonable thing is it then for a christian to fear what men or devils can do against him, for they cannot hurt his best life! It is above the reach of all the assaults of earth or hell. Our Lord Jesus teaches us not to be afraid of them who only can kill the body; for the soul is not in their reach; nor is it possible for them to prevent the body from partaking of its share, in the glorious life appointed for a christian at the great rising-day.

We see here upon what firm grounds the doctrine of a christian's perseverance is built; Christ is his life, *Jesus the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.* The all-sufficient God, and his eternal Son, have undertaken for the security of it; *John* x. 28, 29, 30. *I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me, is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.* God hath sworn by his holiness, that the seed of Christ shall endure for ever; *Psal.* lxxxix. 35, 36. and that his loving kindness shall not be utterly taken away from his own children: and our Lord Jesus Christ doth little less than swear to the perseverance of his disciples, when he says; John xiv. 19. *Because I live, ye shall live also:* for, as I live, is the oath of God.

Why art thou cast down, O believer, and why is thy soul disquieted within thee? Hope in God thy life, for thou shalt yet praise him, how many and great soever thine adversaries are, and how difficult soever thy path and duty may be, and how loud soever thy foes threaten thy destruction. There may be many things in thy travels through this world, that may hurt or hinder the growth of thy spiritual life, and may for a season interpose, as it were, between thee and thy God; but neither life, nor death, nor princi-

palities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, shall ever separate thee entirely from him, whose love is secured in Jesus Christ; *Rom.* viii. 38, 39. The disciples were much to blame, that they were overwhelmed with terror in the midst of the storm, while Jesus Christ was with them in the same ship; and ye should chide your own souls, when you feel yourselves under such unbelieving fears as our Lord Jesus Christ chid in his fearful followers: "O ye of little faith, wherefore did ye doubt?"

IId Consolation. What a comfortable thought must it be to a poor feeble christian, that God and Christ know all the state of his spiritual life? for it is hid with them. Though the life of a saint has a cloud upon it, though it is entirely hidden from men, and sometimes too much hidden from himself too, yet the Father and the Saviour know every circumstance of it, how low it is, how feeble, what daily obstacles it meets with, what hourly enemies assault it. Christ our Lord well knows when our life is in danger, and what are the necessary supplies.

This is very encouraging to a poor trembling believer, when he hardly knows how to address the throne of grace himself in such a manner, as to represent all his wants, and all his spiritual sorrows and difficulties to God in prayer; but our Lord Jesus Christ, who is a compassionate High-priest, who is our head, and near a-kin to us his members, is perfectly acquainted with our state: And the christian, mourning under the decays of grace, can look up to Christ with hope, he can mingle new exercises of faith and dependence, among his sighs and his groans, and commit his case afresh to Jesus his Saviour, with a humble and a holy acquiescence in him. Christ himself, who is the believer's life, must know, and will take care of all affairs which relate to his spiritual and eternal welfare.

It is a matter of sweet consolation too, when a humble christian, who walks carefully before God, is reproached by the world for a deceiver and a hypocrite, that he can appeal to God, with whom his life is hid, and say, "My record is on high; though my friends, or my enemies, may scorn, or deride me, yet he knoweth the way that I take, and the secret exercises of my hidden life; He knows my longings and breathings of soul after him, and that nothing but his love can satisfy me: He knows my diligence and my holy labour to please him: He knows the wrestlings and the conflicts that I go through hourly, to maintain my close walking with my God: He knows that I live, though it is but a feeble life; and the charges of the world against me are false and malicious." It is with a relish of holy pleasure that the christian sometimes, in secret, appeals to our Lord Jesus Christ, as Peter did, and says, *Lord, thou who knowest all things, knowest that I love thee;* John xxi. 17.

IIId Consolation. It is a matter of unspeakable comfort to a christian, that the most terrible things to a sinner, are become the greatest blessings to a saint: And these are death and judgment. What can be more dreadful to those who know not God than those two words are; for they put an eternal end to all their present pleasures, and to all their hopes? But what greater happiness can a saint wish or hope for, than death and judgment will put him in possession of? The one carries his soul upward where his life is, that is, to God and Christ in heaven; the other brings his life down to earth, where his body is, for Christ shall then come to raise his dust from the grave.

I confess, I finished my former discourse on this text, with a meditation on death and judgment; how the gloom which hung around the saint in this life, is all dispelled at that blessed hour; and he who was unknown and despised among men, stands forth

with honour amongst admiring angels: His hidden manner of life is for ever at an end. But in this discourse the secret and glorious springs of his life, *viz.* God and Christ, will naturally lead us to the same delightful meditations of futurity, as the hidden manner of it has done; and there is so rich a variety of new and transporting scenes and ideas attending that subject, that I have no need to tire you with unpleasing repetition, though I resume the glorious theme.

Let my consolations proceed then, and let the saints rejoice.

At the moment of death, the soul may say, "Farewel, for ever, sins, and sorrows, and perplexities; farewel, temptations of the alluring, and the affrighting kind: neither the vanities, nor the terrors of this world, shall reach me any more; for I shall from this moment for ever dwell where my joy, my life is. All my springs are in God, and I shall be for ever with him."—And when the morning of the resurrection dawns upon the world, and the day of judgment appears, the body of a christian shall be called out of the dust, and shall bid farewel for ever to death and darkness; to disease and pain, to all the fruits of sin, and all the effects of the curse. Christ, who is the resurrection and the life, stands up as a complete conqueror over all the powers of the grave: He bids the sacred dust, arise and live; the dust obeys, and revives; the whole saint appears exulting in life; the date of his immortality then begins, and his life shall run on to everlasting ages.

Methinks such lively views of death should incline us rather to desire to depart from the body, that we may dwell with Christ. Death is but the flight of the soul where its divine life is. Why should we make it a matter of fear then, to be absent from the body, if we are immediately present with the Lord? Methinks, under the influence of such meditations of the resurrection, faith should breathe, and long for the last appearance of Christ, and rejoice in the language of holy Job: *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth;* Job xix. 25. A christian should send his hopes and his wishes forward to meet the chariot-wheels of our Lord Jesus the Judge; for the day of his appearance is but the display of our life, and the perfection of our blessedness. *When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall* we *also appear with him in glory;* Col. iii. 4. My thoughts kindle at the sound of that blessed promise, and I long to let contemplation loose on a theme so divinely glorious. If ever the pomp of language be indulged, and the magnificence of words, it must be to display this bright solemnity, this illustrious appearance, which outshines all the pomp of words, and the utmost magnificence of language. Come, my friends, let us meditate the sacred conformity of the saints to Christ, first, in their hidden, and then in their glorious life; as he was on earth, so are they; both hated of the world, both unknown in it. The disciples must be trained up for public honours, as their Master was, in this hideous and howling wilderness, in caves of darkness, or rather in a den of savages. They must follow the Captain of their salvation through a thousand dangers and sufferings; and they shall receive their crown too, and a glory like that which arrays their divine Leader.

O may I never think it hard to trace the footsteps of my Lord, though it be in a miry, or a thorny way! May I never repine at poverty and meanness of circumstance in my present pilgrimage! nor think it strange if the world scorn and abuse me, or if Satan, the foul spirit, should assault and buffet me sorely! Dare I hope to appear in glory, when Christ, who is my life, appears; and can I not bear to attend him in sufferings and

shame? Am I better than my blessed Lord? What poor attendants had the Son of God, at his first entrance into our world! How mean was every thing that belonged to him on earth! What vile and despicable raiment, unworthy of the Prince of glory! What coarse provision, and sorry furniture, to entertain incarnate godhead! And how impious was the treatment he found among men, and impudent temptations from the same foul spirit! He had snares, sorrows, and temptations, watching all around him: the sorrows of death compassed him about, and the powers of darkness crouded him with their envious assaults; earth and hell were at once engaged against him; they hung him bleeding on a cursed and infamous tree, lifted on high to be made a more public gazing-stock, and an object of wider scorn! Blessed Saviour! how divine was thy patience to endure all these indignities, and not call for thy Father's legions, nor thy own thunder!

But, this was the hour of thy appointed combat, the place of thy voluntary obscurity, and the season of thy hidden life; and thy saints must bear thy resemblance in both worlds. How unspeakable were thy past sorrows! and thy present glories all unspeakable! How infinitely different were these dark and mournful scenes, from the joys and honours thou hast purchased by those very sufferings! Sacred honours and joys without alloy, which thou art now possessed of as their great forerunner, and hast made ready for thy subjects in thy own kingdom! What robes of light shall array thy followers in that day; what bright planet, or brighter star, shall be the place of their dwelling? or shall all those shining worlds be mansions of various residence, as thou shalt lead thy saints successively through the vast and numerous provinces of thy boundless dominion? Sorrow, sin, and temptation, shall be named no more, unless to triumph over them in immortal songs. The fairest spirits of light, in their own heavenly forms, shall be the companions and attendants of the children of God. Jesus, the Lord of glory, is their king and head, the leader of their triumph, and the pattern of their exaltation. Jesus shall appear in his meridian lustre, as the Sun of Righteousness in the noon of heaven; yet the beams of his influence shall be gentle as the morning-star. There needs no other sun in that upper world; the Lamb is the light thereof. Jesus, the ornament of paradise, and the delight of God, shall be the eternal and beatific object of their senses, and their souls; they must be *where he is, to behold his glory.*

The blessed God shall dwell among them, and lay out upon them the riches of his own all-sufficiency; riches of wisdom, grace, and power, all-surprizing, and all-infinite. Divine power shall then reveal all the glory that has been laid up for them, of old, in the purposes of God, or in the promises of the book of life. But it was fit it should be hidden there, while the time of their probation lasted; it was fit they should live by faith, and under some degrees of darkness, while the ages of sin and temptation were rolling away: it was divinely proper that eternal life should not break forth, nor the splendours of the third heaven be made too conspicuous, till the six thousand years of mortality and death had finished their revolutions round the lower skies, and had answered the scheme of divine counsel and judgment, on a world where sin had entered.

But life and heaven must not be hid for ever. The almighty word, in that day, shall bid the ancient decree bring forth, and the promise unfold itself in public light. What new worlds of unseen felicity! What scenes of delight, and celestial blessings, never yet revealed to the race of Adam! when the rivers of pleasure, that had run under ground from the earth's foundation, shall break up in immortal fountains!

Mercy and truth shall lavish out upon men with an unsparing hand all those treasures

of life which were hid in God, and in the gospel for them. The All-wise shall please himself in making so noble creatures, out of so mean materials, dust and ashes. Glorified saints are master-pieces of divine skill; and the blessed original, or first exemplar of them, the man Jesus, is the perfection of the contrivance of God; here he has abounded in all wisdom and prudence. Then the inhabitants of upper worlds shall see an illustrious and holy creation, rising out of the ruins of this wretched globe, involved all in guilt, and weltering in penal fire. When this scene opens, what sounding acclamations shall echo from world to world, and new universal honours be paid to Divine Wisdom! The morning-stars shall sing together again, and those holy armies shout for joy. The grace of God descending to earth, in days past, had in some measure prepared his children for glory: but in that day he shall enlarge their capacities, both of sense and of mind, to an inconceivable extent, and shall fill the powers of their glorified nature with the fruits of his love, new and old.

And what if the limits of our capacity shall be for ever stretching themselves on all sides, and for ever drinking in larger measures of glory; what an astonishing state of ever-growing pleasure! What an eternal advance of our heaven! The godhead is an infinite ocean of life and blessedness, and finite vessels may be for ever swelling, and for ever filling in that sea of all-sufficiency. There must be no tiresome satiety in that everlasting entertainment. God shall create the joys of his saints ever fresh: he shall throw open his endless stores of blessing, unknown even to the first rank of angels: and feast the sons and daughters of men with pleasures a-kin to those which were prepared for the Son of God. For verily he took not upon him the nature of angels, but the likeness of sinful flesh: and when he shall appear the second time without sin to our salvation, we shall then be made like him, for we shall see him as he is. *Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMONS IX. AND X.

THE HIDDEN LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN.

I.

O HAPPY soul, that lives on high,
While men lie grov'ling here!
His hopes are fix'd above the sky,
And faith forbids his fear.

II.

His conscience knows no secret stings,
While grace and joy combine
To form a life, whose holy springs
Are hidden and divine.

III.

He waits in secret on his God;
His God in secret sees:
Let earth be all in arms abroad,
He dwells in heavenly peace.

IV.

His pleasures rise from things unseen,
Beyond this world and time,
Where neither eyes nor ears have been,
Nor thoughts of mortals climb.

V.

He wants no pomp, nor royal throne
To raise his figure here;
Content, and pleas'd to live unknown,
Till Christ his life appear.

VI.

He looks to heaven's eternal hills,
To meet that glorious day;
Dear Lord, how slow thy chariot-wheels!
How long is thy delay!

SERMON XI.

NEARNESS TO GOD THE FELICITY OF CREATURES.

PSALM lxv. 4.

BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOM THOU CHOOSEST, AND CAUSEST TO APPROACH UNTO THEE, THAT HE MAY DWELL IN THY COURTS.

THE FIRST PART.

IT was an elegant address that the Queen of Sheba made to Solomon, when she had surveyed the magnificence of his court, and had heard his wisdom: "Happy are thy men, and happy are these thy servants, who stand continually before thee!" 1 *Kings* x. 8. And there was much truth and honour in her speech. But the harp of David strikes a diviner note; Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, O God, that he may approach unto thee, and dwell in thy courts, in the holy sanctuary!

Whether, in these words, the Psalmist blesses those levites and priests, whose duty it was to attend the ark, and to dwell near the tabernacle, or whether he pronounces blessedness on every man of Israel, whose habitation nigh the ark gave him frequent opportunities to attend at that solemn worship, is not very necessary to determine. Either of these may be called dwelling in the courts of God. But it is most probable, that the sacred writer designs the second sense of the word, and that he includes himself in the desire or possession of this blessedness, though he was neither a priest nor a levite; for he uses the same phrase in several places, and applies it to himself; Psal. xxvii. 4. *One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life;* Psal. xxiii. 6.—*I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.* By which he intimates, that he would seek the most frequent opportunities of approaching God in public worship.

It is sufficient to my present purpose, that the holy Psalmist makes the *blessedness of man* to depend upon his *near approaches to God.*

Here we should remember, that God is necessarily near to all his creatures, by his infinite knowledge, by his preserving and governing power: *He is not far from every one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being;* Acts xvii. 27, 28. But the privilege which David speaks of in my text, is a *peculiar approach of a creature to God,* which is a fruit of divine choice and favour. The souls who enjoy this blessing are chosen to it, and by divine providence and mercy are *caused to approach him.* What further explication of this phrase is necessary, will be sufficiently given in the following parts of the discourse.

Let this then be the doctrine which I shall attempt to confirm and improve, *viz.*

Doctrine. Nearness to God is the foundation of a creature's happiness.

This may be proved with ease, if we consider, what it is that makes an intelligent

being happy; and how well such an approach to God furnishes us with all the means of attaining it. The ingredients of happiness are these three: 1. The contemplation of the most excellent object; 2. The love of the chiefest good; and, 3. A delightful sense of being beloved by an all-sufficient power, or an almighty friend.

I. The contemplation of the most excellent object. And he who is nearest to God, has the fairest advantages of this kind. The understanding is a noble faculty of our natures; truth is its proper food; and truth, in all the boundless varieties and beauties of it, is the object of its pursuit, when it is refined from sensualities.

This is the delight of the *philosopher*, to search all the hidden wonders of nature, and pursue truth with a most pleasurable and restless fatigue: for this he climbs the heavens, traces the planetary and the starry worlds: for this he pries into the bowels of the earth, and sounds the depths of the ocean; and when, with immense toil of mind, he has found out some unknown natural truth, how are all the powers of his soul charmed within him, and he exults, as it were, in a little paradise!

But the souls, who are admitted to draw nearest to God, contemplate infinite truth in its original. They converse with that divine artificer, who spread abroad these curtains of heaven, who moulded this globe of earth, and furnished the upper and the lower worlds with all their admirable varieties. He is a God of glory and beauty in himself, as well as the author of all the beauties of nature. All his perfections, as well as his works, yield heavenly matter for contemplation: he eminently contains in himself all the amazing scenes of nature, and the more transporting wonders of the world of grace; those mysteries wherein *he has abounded in all wisdom and prudence:* how the ruined sons of Adam were rescued from death, by the Son of God dying in their stead; how Satan was baffled in his most subtle designs, and the deepest policies of hell undermined, when the prince of darkness destroyed his own kingdom, by persuading men to put the Son of God to death.

What a divine pleasure is it to converse with that wisdom which laid the eternal scheme of all these wonders, and of ten thousand more unknown beauties in the transactions of providence and grace, with which the blessed minds above are feasted to satisfaction! And besides all these, God has reserved in himself a hidden world of new scenes to open hereafter, and an everlasting profusion of new wonders to display before the eyes of his favourites. Heaven is described by *seeing God*, by *beholding him face to face*, and by *knowing* him in the way and manner in which *we are known;* 1 Cor. xiii. 12. And he is pleased to indulge some taste of this felicity to his children in this life, by mediums and glasses, by types and figures, by his word and ordinances, under the enlightening beams of his Spirit. This is the *beauty of the Lord*, for the view of which David desired to *dwell in* the sanctuary; *Psalm* xxvii. 4. that he might see the power and glory of God continually, as he had sometimes seen it there: that he might behold his beauty, and talk of his glorious goodness in his holy temple. O *how great is his goodness! and how great is his beauty!* Zech. ix. 17.

But contemplation alone cannot make a creature happy: this only entertains the understanding, which is but one faculty of our natures: the will and affections must have their proper entertainment too. Their beatific exercise may be comprised in the word love, either in the outgoings or the returns of it: and this leads me to the following particulars:

II. The next ingredient of a creature's happiness, is, the love of the chiefest good. And those *whom God chooses, and causes to approach himself*, when they are under divine illuminations, see so much beauty and excellency in his nature, his power and wisdom, and so many lovely glories in his overflowing grace, that they cannot but love him above all things; and this love is a great part of their heaven. What sweeter pleasure is there in this lower world, than to give a loose to the affectionate powers of the soul, to converse with the most amiable and most desired object, to feed upon it without ceasing, and to dwell with it perpetually? But the most relishing enjoyments of this kind that mortality admits of, in the pursuit or possession of created good, are but faint and feeble shadows of the blessedness of holy souls in the love of God, who is the most amiable, and the best of beings: therefore *they love him with all their heart and soul, with all their mind and strength;* and if they had more powers in nature that could be employed in love, they should all be laid out in the search and fruition of this first and best beloved: for there are endless stores and treasures of unknown loveliness in the godhead, to excite and entertain for ever the fresh efforts of the most exalted love. But for me to know, and to love the best of beings, cannot make me completely happy, unless I am *beloved* of him also, and unless I *feel* that he loves me. Happiness requires mutual love.

III. The third ingredient therefore of our felicity, and that which perfects the blessedness of a creature, is, the delightful sense of the love of an almighty friend. To know, to love, and to be beloved by such a being, must complete our bliss; one who hath all beauty, and all goodness in himself; one who can free us from every pain, secure us against every peril, and confer upon us every pleasure. This is the perfection of our heaven, when all these are enjoyed in a perfect degree, without any alloy. Now such is the state of those who *are chosen and caused to approach unto God*, so as to know him, and love him; that they have the chiefest advantages to obtain the assurance and taste of his love. The man whom the Psalmist pronounces blessed in my text, hopes for this pleasure in *the house of God*, that he shall be *satisfied with the* divine *goodness* there.

The *loving-kindness* of God is life, or something *better than life;* Psalm lxiii. 3. and to have a sensation of this loving-kindness, is to feel that I live. To think, to know, and to be assured that I am beloved, by an all-sufficient Power, *who can do more* for me *than I can ask or think*, in life, and death, and in eternity, and to have pleasing and spiritual sensations of *this shed abroad in the heart;* this raises the christian near to the upper heaven, while he dwells on earth, and he *rejoices with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.*

Some may object here and say, Is it no part of our blessedness then to love the saints, to rejoice in their love, to contemplate the works of God, and his wonders in creation and providence? Answer, Yes, surely; and we have allowed it before: but when we take true satisfaction in any of these, it is as they proceed from God, as they relate to God, and lead our souls to centre in him; for God, who is the first cause, must be the last end of all, and no creatures, as divided from him, can make us either holy or happy.

I proceed to make some improvement of the few thoughts I have delivered on this subject.

1. My first reflection should be upon the scale of blessedness, or the several degrees

of felicity that creatures are possessed of, according to their advancing approaches toward God: but my meditations dilate themselves here to so large an extent, as makes it necessary to adjourn this thought to the next discourse. I proceed therefore to the

II. Reflection. What unknown evil is contained in the nature of every sin, for it divides the creature from God and from happiness! It may be said to every soul on earth, as it was once said to Israel; *Your iniquities have separated between you and your God;* Isaiah lix. 2. What a world of endless mischief was comprised in the first sin of Adam, whereby this lower creation was, as it were, cut off from God at once! Man was at first happy in the image and love of his Maker, a-kin to him by nature and creation, as a son to a father: Adam was *the son of God;* Luke iii. 38. and he enjoyed the privilege and the pleasure of holy nearness to God, and humble converse with him. He read the name of his Maker in all his works; he could contemplate divine wisdom, power, and goodness, there; he loved his Creator with all his soul, and was happy in his Creator's love. But when sin entered, Adam fled from his heavenly Father, and his friend; *he hid himself among the trees in the garden,* when the voice of the Lord called after him, *Adam, where art thou?* And it has been the dismal description of sinners ever since, that they are *afar off from God.*

O what tongue can express, or what heart can conceive, the immense load, and everlasting train of mischiefs and miseries, that lie heavy on poor mankind, and have pursued human nature, in all the infinite members and branches of it, through all ages and nations, for almost six thousand years! All these were introduced by man's first disobedience. We are a sinful race of creatures, born in the likeness of the original sinner: we come into the world *estranged from God, and go astray from the womb;* for we were *shapen* in iniquity, and conceived in sin; *Psalm* lviii. 3. and li. 5. It is the temper and spirit of mankind, by nature, to desire an absence from God, and to wish their own misery; Job xxi. 14. *What is the Almighty that we should serve him?—Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* By nature we love him not, nor do we seek after his love. This is your state, and this mine by nature: these are our hateful and deplorable circumstances, and yet we go on to aggravate our own guilt, to run further from God hourly, and to make haste to everlasting wretchedness, if divine grace prevent us not.

III. Reflection. Is nearness to God the foundation of the creature's felicity? then how vain are all pretences to happiness, while man is a stranger to God! Let him be surrounded with all imaginable delights of sense, or let him be furnished with all advantages of reason or natural knowledge, to entertain the mind; yet if he be afar off from God, he must be afar off from blessedness. *Without God, and without hope,* is the character of the sinful world. Do the profane and sensual wretches boast of their pleasures, while God is not in all their thoughts? Empty shews of pleasure, and vain shadows! And even these shadows, these vain flatteries, are ever flying from their embraces; they delude their pursuit in this world, and shall vanish all at once at the moment of death, and leave them in everlasting sorrow.

Let the sensualist *sport himself in his own deceivings,* and bless himself in the midst of his madness: let the rich worldling say, "*Soul, take thine ease,* for thy barns and thy chests are full." Let the mere philosopher glory that he has found happiness out; let him busy himself in refined subtilties, and swell in the pride of his reason: let all these pretenders to felicity compliment each other, if they please, or call themselves the only

happy men; yet the meanest, and the weakest of all the saints, would not make an exchange with them; for the saint is brought nigh to God: and though his poverty here be never so great, and his understanding never so contemptible, yet he knows this great truth well, that to exchange God for the creature, would be infinite loss, and misery unspeakable. They who never drew near to God, who never saw God in his works or his word, so as to love him above all things, and partake of his love, must be miserable in spite of all their pretences: *They that are far from God shall perish;* Psalm lxxiii. 27.

IV. Reflection. God has not utterly abandoned this world to sin and misery, while he keeps his word and his ordinances in it: for these are his appointed means of approaching to him, and steps whereby we may climb to the blessedness of saints and angels. God sent his word after Adam the sinner, when he fled from him in paradise, that he might recal man back to himself; and he has been ever since sending messages of peace, and invitations of love, to a ruined and rebellious world. Happy sinners, who hear the voice of an inviting God, who turn their back upon the perishing vanities of life and time, who forsake the creatures, and return to their Creator again! Thousands of the sons and daughters of Adam have accepted the messages of this grace, and have been by these methods trained up for glory: by conversing with God in his ordinances, and dwelling in his courts on earth, they have been happily prepared for an everlasting habitation in his court of heaven. We this day are favoured with the same divine call in the gospel; let every soul of us rejoice and follow.

V. Reflection. The true value of things on earth may be judged of and determined by their tendency to bring us near to God and heaven. The common measure of our esteem of things, is the influence they have to promote what we think our happiness. Now, if our judgment be set right in this point, and we are convinced that an approach to God is the way to be happy, then whatsoever leads us nearest to God, will rise in value in our esteem.

Then our hearts will set a high esteem on those friends or relatives who draw us to the knowledge and love of God: then we shall prize the ministrations of the gospel in England above the riches of both the Indies: then we shall not think the ministry of the word a mean and contemptible employment, nor delight to hear scandals thrown on the persons or the characters of those who are engaged in it; for *these are the servants of the living God, who shew us the way* to be happy. Then we shall commend those sermons, and those writings most, not that have most wit and fancy in them, but those which we feel and find to draw our hearts farthest off from sin and the creature, and bring them nearest to God: and then, if there were but one Bible in the world, we should all agree to say, that there is not treasure enough in all the material creation to purchase it out of our hands.

VI. Reflection. All the means of separation from God should be numbered among the instruments of real misery.

Does Satan, the fallen angel, solicit our youth with his flatteries; that it is time enough to mind religion yet; let us have a few more gaudy days first? Does he frighten the aged sinner with terrible falsehoods, and tempt him to an utter despair of grace? Let his wicked suggestions be renounced with disdain, and let him never prevail to keep one soul of us at a distance from God; for his first business was to divide us from God, and to ruin our happiness: and it is his daily employment to hold us fast in the chains of iniquity and death, and thus to prevent our return to God.

Does the flesh allure us to pursue sinful delights? Does it awaken and charm our imagination with the flowery and fatal scenes of luxury and mirth? Do the lusts of the flesh, or the lusts of the eye, persuade us to seek happiness among them; and tempt us, at least for the present, to lay aside the thoughts of God? Let us set a strict guard upon ourselves, and watch all the avenues of sense and appetite, lest we be drawn off from the practice of piety, and the service, and the love of God, where true happiness is only to be found.

Do you find, O christians, that the world begins to creep into your hearts? Do you find any creature sit too near your souls, and take up any of that time and room which God should have there? Awake, betimes, and bestir yourselves, lest it divide you from your happiness. When you feel your spirits at any time grow cold in religious worship, when you can pass a day with an indifference about secret converse with God, and be content to be long absent from him, search with diligence what enemy it is that has crept in secretly, and interposes betwixt God and you: and when you have found it, never rest, till by the aids of divine grace, you have removed the idol from your thoughts, and your soul be restored to its holy nearness to God again. I might say in general, concerning all this world, keep your hearts aloof from it, while your hands, and perhaps your heads too, are engaged in the necessary affairs of it. The nearer your souls are to the creatures, the farther they depart from God and blessedness. As a natural consequence from this thought, we may raise a

VII. Reflection. Wanderings, and vain thoughts in the time of religious worship, are, and will be, the great burdens of a child of God; for they clog him, and keep him down, when he would rise to his heavenly Father; they are bars in his way to blessedness, for they hinder his approach to God. But what wretched creatures are we, if we indulge vain thoughts, and worldly images and idols in the house of God, without complaint, and without mourning! What holy shame and repentance should it work in us, to think, that even in the place where the great and blessed God comes to shew his face, we should be building up walls and partitions to hide his face from us! that we should turn away our faces from him in the hour when he comes on purpose to meet us!

I might add, as a concluding reflection, that it is a tiresome bondage to a saint, in a devout frame, to dwell so long in this body of flesh and blood. This mortal state prevents our complete happiness every hour that we tarry in it. While we sojourn in this tabernacle, we are so much the farther from God; while *we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord;* 2 Cor. v. 6. This mortal flesh is a painful veil to the lively christian, for it divides him from the sight and full enjoyment of his chosen blessedness. At the best we see God but *darkly through a glass* while we dwell here; the moment of release places us in the region of spirits, *where we shall see him face to face;* 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Though all these reflections may afford us many useful rules for our practice, yet I will not finish the discourse without a few inferences which are more expressly practical.

Practical Directions.—1. Give all glory to God for ever, who brings himself so near to us: he puts us thus far in the road to happiness, when he builds his houses amongst us, when he approaches to us in his holy ordinances, when he calls, and causes us to approach to him, and gives us kind and sure promises of eternal blessedness above in his immediate presence. Let each of us join with Solomon in that noble piece of worship; 1 Kings viii. 27. *But will God indeed dwell on earth? Behold the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, how much less any house* that is *built* for thee? Yet the Lord is near to

the churches of his saints, when they worship him: *he is near to all that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth;* Psalm cxlv. 18. And *his word is near us*, even in our hands, and on our lips; that word which teaches us the way to approach God, and ensures the blessedness.

O give glory to God, the great and holy God, that he should ever be willing to let sinners approach him; that the Majesty of heaven, and the supreme Lord of all, who had been highly provoked by his rebellious creatures, should ever come into terms of reconciliation; that he himself should provide a reconciling sacrifice, to satisfy his own governing justice, and a reconciling spirit to reduce the rebel man to his obedience and love. This divine condescension, O my soul, demands thy wonder and thy worship.

2. Adore the mystery of the incarnation, and bless God incarnate; for this is the ground of all our habitual nearness to God, and all our actual approaches to him and heaven. It was the Son of God, who is one with the Father, that stooped down, and approached to our nature, and took a part of it into union with himself, that we might approach to the Deity: *No man cometh to the Father, but by* the Son; *John* xiv. 6. For ever had we, the wretched offspring of Eve, been banished from the courts and the presence of God, had not this man Jesus, the son of Mary, been caused first to draw near, and to dwell near; and blessed be his name for ever.

We rejoice with all the powers of our souls, to think how near to God the man Jesus is, for since he approaches the throne, we shall approach too; *Rev.* iii. 21. We shall be blessed through his blessedness; *Gal.* iii. 8, 14. He was first chosen to draw near, and *we chosen in him;* Eph. i. 4. Nearness to God is still a matter of divine choice and distinction: he approaches to God above, accepted in his own spotless righteousness, and we in him: he is in a more transcendent manner one with God, and we must be united to God by him, and so made somewhat like him; *John* xvii. 24. When our Mediator approaches to the Father in worship, he, as our High-priest, *bears the name* of the whole church in heaven and earth, *on his breast*, and *on his shoulders;* Exod. xxxviii. 12, 29. In his beauty of holiness, we unholy creatures are presented before God, and caused to approach with glorious acceptance.

Stand still here, O ye saints of the Most High, and survey your privileges and your honours; and remember, that whensoever you draw near to God in the courts of his house, it was Jesus who drew near first, it is Jesus who still dwells near to make you acceptable: it is he who maintains the nearness of your state, and your peace with God, by ever presenting your natures in his person: *He appears in the presence of God for us;* Heb. ix. 24. It is Jesus, who, by his Spirit, lifts you up near to the Father; and it is by his best beloved and nearest Son, that God the Father draws near to all his children.

3. Be not found amongst the mockers of approach to God, and holy converse with him in worship. They despise felicity itself. Such there have been of old, and such there are in our days; and because they are afar off from God themselves, they deny all nearness to him, they ridicule our approaches to God, as the vain effects of a wild imagination, and the mere sensible commotions of a warm fancy.

But is it not a very rational and intelligible thing, for a soul in public worship, so to draw near to God, as to learn more of him, and to know more of his perfections and graces than he knew before? May not such a worshipper have his love to God raised and warmed by such advancing knowledge? And may he not arise, by holy inferences,

to a livelier and a surer hope that he is beloved of God too, and solace himself in this assurance? What is there in all this which is not perfectly agreeable to reason, or that should provoke an impious jest? But let such have a care, lest they blaspheme God and his Spirit; let them take heed, lest they be thrust down to hell, and set at a dreadful distance from God, without remedy, who deride the joy of heaven.

4. Take heed of those deceits of being above ordinances, lest you lose true happiness through pride and vain conceit. Abandon the vain fancy of living nearer to God in the neglect of them. God is glorious in himself, but he has appointed ordinances, as means whereby we may approach and see him. Some stars, though large in themselves, yet are not visible without glasses; and others that are visible to the naked eye, yet appear much fairer and larger by this help. Even so those glories of God, which are unknown to reason, and to the light of nature, are discovered in the ministrations of his word; such are his subsistence in three Persons, and his forgiving grace; and those glories of his nature, which are traced out by human reason, stand in a diviner light, with all their splendours about them, in the gospel, and the sanctuary.

5. Never rest satisfied without approaching to God in spirit and in truth, when you attend on his ordinances. This is the goodness of his house that must satisfy the holy soul of the Psalmist, as he expresses it in the following words of my text: *We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thine house.*

What a folly it is to be pleased with empty ordinances without God! 1 Tim. iv. 8. *Bodily exercise profiteth little.* To make a serious matter of mere external things, and to make nothing of spiritual ones! These formal and silly creatures come to the palace of the king, and turn their backs on his person, to play with his shadow upon the wall: ridiculous and childish folly! And yet how often is this the trifling practice of the men of wisdom! And sometimes persons of true piety are tempted to indulge it. Let me ask my conscience, "Did I never let my curiosity dwell upon the just reasoning, the correct style, the pretty similies, the flowing oratory, or flowery beauties of a sermon, while I neglected to seek my God there, and to raise my soul near him? Or perhaps I was charmed with the decency and voice of the preacher; or, it may be, was better entertained with some zealous party flights which flattered my own bitter zeal, and seemed to sanctify my uncharitable censures; and when I returned from the place of worship, I had a pleasant remembrance of all these." But it had been better, if conscience had reproached my folly, and made me remember, that I had forgot my God there.

It is also a dreadful abuse of gospel-ordinances, and a high mockery of God, to come to his courts, and not draw near him; *Jer.* xii. 2. When *God is near in our mouth, but far from our heart.* Ordinances are an appointed medium for man to come to God by them. If we use them not as such, we either make idols of them, by placing of them in God's stead, or we make nothing of them, no means of converse with God; both ways we nullify them, for an idol is nothing, and mere vanity, as the prophets and the apostles speak: So ordinances are vain and unprofitable, and utterly insufficient to make us happy without God. They are mere images, and shadows without the substance.

To seek after God, and endeavour to approach him in all his own institutions, is the way to be recovered from the miseries of the fall. To live in a holy nearness to God, is a restoration to the pleasures of innocency. It is the full hap-

piness of reasonable natures to be always with God: it is our noblest honour, and our sweetest consolation, in this state of darkness and trial, to get as near him as earth and grace will admit; and it is also the best preparative for heaven and the state of glory, where we shall dwell for ever near him, and be for ever blessed. *Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMON XI.

NEARNESS TO GOD THE FELICITY OF CREATURES.

I.

ARE those the happy persons here,
Who dwell the nearest to their God?
Has God invited sinners near;
And Jesus bought this grace with blood?

II.

Go then, my soul, address the Son,
To lead thee near the Father's face;
Gaze on his glories yet unknown,
And taste the blessings of his grace.

III.

Vain vexing world, and flesh, and sense,
Retire while I approach my God;
Nor let my sins divide me thence,
Nor creatures tempt my thoughts abroad.

IV.

While to thine arms, my God, I press,
No mortal hope, nor joy, nor fear,
Shall call my soul from thine embrace;
'Tis heaven to dwell for ever there.

SERMON XII.

THE SCALE OF BLESSEDNESS: OR, BLESSED SAINTS, BLESSED SAVIOUR, AND BLESSED TRINITY.

PSALM lxv. 4.

BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOM THOU CHOOSEST, AND CAUSEST TO APPROACH UNTO THEE, THAT HE MAY DWELL IN THY COURTS.

THE SECOND PART.

BY the entrance of sin into the world, man was first separated from God and happiness: God in righteous anger withdrew from his creature man; and man, obeying the dictates of his own impious folly, runs farther away from his Maker God; *He is born like a wild ass's colt*, unknowing and thoughtless: and like a colt he runs wild in the forest of this world, roving amongst a thousand vanities in quest of happiness, but afar off from God still. He seeks substantial and pleasant food, but he meets with broad barren sands in the wilderness, or with brakes, and briers, and bitter weeds. He follows every foolish fire of fancy, till he is led into many a pit and precipice: He rises again, and changes the chase: He flies perpetually from object to object, but finds everlasting disappointment: Shadows, and painted hopes, flatter, and tire, and delude him, till he lies down and despairs in death.

This is the case of mankind by nature; they live ignorant of God, and wilfully blind to their own felicity. Fatal blindness, and wretched mankind! But blessed be God, that he has not renounced and abandoned all our race for ever, and fixed us in a state of eternal separation from him! Blessed be God, who has chosen and already called many of the wanderers to himself again! He has built dwellings for himself on earth; he has appointed means for our return, and invites all to approach him. Good David had a full and lively sense hereof, when he wrote the words of this song; *Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts:* Whence I derived this doctrine in the foregoing sermon.

Doctrine. Nearness to God is the foundation of a creature's happiness.

This doctrine appeared in full evidence, while we considered the three chief ingredients of true felicity, *viz.* the contemplation of the noblest object, to satisfy all the powers of the understanding; the love of the supreme good, to answer the utmost propensities of the will; and the sweet and everlasting sensation and assurance of the love of an almighty Friend, who will free us from all the evils which our nature can fear, and confer upon us all the good which a wise and innocent creature can desire. Thus all the capacities of man are employed in their highest and sweetest exercises and enjoyments. Now it is God alone, the great and ever-blessed God, who can furnish us with all these materials of blessedness, who can refine our natures, and who can thus engage and entertain all the powers and appetites of our natures refined.

Having finished what I designed in the explication and proof of this doctrine, I proceeded to make various reflections for our information and practice. But the meditation which I proposed, and reserved for this discourse, was the sacred scale of blessedness, or the several degrees of felicity, that creatures are possessed of, according to their advancing approaches toward God; and we shall find blessedness, in its highest perfection, to belong only to God himself.

First degree of Blessedness.—I. Happy are they who, though they are sinners by nature, yet are brought so near to God, as to be within the sound and call of his grace. In this sense the whole nation of the Jews was a people near unto God, for he shewed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel; and upon this account they were happy, in ancient ages, above all kingdoms of the earth; *Psal.* cxlvii. and cxlviii.

Happy those countries where the apostles of Christ planted the gospel, and brought grace and salvation near them, though they were before at a dreadful distance from God! Happy Britons in our age! Though we are involved, with the rest of mankind, in the common ruins of our first defection from God, yet we are not left in the darkness of heathenism, on the very confines of hell: But God has exalted us near to heaven and himself, in the ministrations of his word, and led us in a way to his everlasting enjoyment. He has built his sanctuaries amongst us, and established his churches in the midst of us. We are invited to behold *the beauty of the Lord*, to return to our obedience and his love, and thus be made happy for ever.

This is a matter of divine choice and peculiar favour. Blessed England, whom *he hath chosen, and caused to approach* thus far towards himself! And why was not the polite nation of China chosen too; And why not the poor savages of Africa, and the barbarous millions of the American world? Why are they left in a dismal estrangement from God, *Even so, Father, because it pleased thee*, whose counsels *are unsearchable, and whose ways of judgment* and *mercy are past finding out.*

Blessed are the people who hear and know the joyful sound; Psalm lxxxix. 15. But there are degrees of this blessedness, even in the lands which enjoy the gospel. Blessed are they above others, who dwell near to the places of public worship, who sit under an enlightening, a powerful and persuasive ministry, who have opportunity to hear the word of God often, and who have skill to read it. Blessed are they who are born of religious parents, and trained up in the early forms of piety; these are still brought nearer unto God; they are nursed up, as it were, in his churches, and dwell in his courts. And blessed are those who are devoted to the service of the sanctuary, like the priests and levites of old, who were brought nearest to God, among all Israel; for their civil employment, as well as their religious duty, led them continually toward God, heaven, and happiness. But all these glorious privileges are not sufficient to ensure eternal felicity, unless we come one step farther in approaching to God.

Second degree of Blessedness.—II. Happy are those souls who have been taught to improve their outward advantages of nearness to God, so as to obtain reconciliation with him by the blood of Christ. This is the great end of all the privileges before-mentioned, which either Jew or gentile were partakers of: This was the design of all the approaches that God made towards them. Peace and salvation were preached *to those which were afar off, and to them that were nigh*, and Christ died to reconcile both unto God; and that *through him both might have an access by one Spirit unto the Father;* Eph. ii. 16, 17, 18. Why are all the alluring glories of the Lord displayed before us,

in his gospel, but that we might be drawn to love him? Why are these wonderous manifestations of his grace made to us, but that we might become the objects of his love, and taste of his special goodness?

Happy persons, who are weary of their old estrangement from God, who have heard and have received the offers of his mercy, who have made their solemn approaches to God by Jesus the Mediator, and are joined to the Lord in a sweet and everlasting covenant! Happy creatures, who behold the beauties of their Maker's face with double pleasure, who love him with all their souls, and begin to taste the love of his heart too! This is a matter of special privilege. *Blessed are the men who are thus chosen* by divine grace, and whom he *has caused to approach to himself* by the converting power of his own Spirit! Let them come, let them come, and give up their names to his churches; let them take up their places, and dwell in his courts on earth, and thus make a nearer approach to his court of heaven.

O that sinners would once be convinced that there are divine pleasures in religion, and *joys which the stranger intermeddles not with!* O that they would be once brought to believe, that happiness consists in approaching to God! That they would but give credit to the report of wise and holy men, who have lived in humble converse with God many years! What a sacred and superior pleasure it is, above all the joys of sense, to love the great and blessed God, and to know that he loves me! To walk all the day in the light of his countenance! To have him near me as a counsellor, whose advice I may ask in every difficulty of life! To be ever near him as my guard, and to fly from every danger to the wing of his protection! To have such an almighty Friend with me in sickness and sorrow, in anguish and mortal agonies, and ready to receive my departing spirit into the arms of his love!

O that the formal and nominal christian, who attends divine worship, would but once be persuaded, that if he come one step nearer to God, his happiness will receive almost an infinite advance! Let the shadows lead him to the substance; let the image in the glass allure him to converse with the original beauty, and the ordinances of grace bring him near to the God of grace! Let him no longer content himself with pictures of happiness, but give himself up entirely to the Lord, and be made possessor of solid and substantial felicity. Blessed is the man who has renounced sin and the world, and his heart is over-powered by divine goodness, and brought near to God in his holy covenant.

Yet there are degrees of blessedness among the saints on earth. Blessed is every soul whose state and nature are changed, who is not a stranger, but a son; but more blessed are those sons who are most like their heavenly Father, and keep closest to him in all their ways! Blessed are they above others in the holy family, who seldom wander from their God, whose hearts are always in a heavenly frame, and whose graces and virtues brighten and improve daily, and make a continual and joyful advance toward the state of glory!

Third degree of Blessedness.—III. Now let us raise our thoughts, and wonder at the blessedness of the saints and angels in the upper world: and blessed are those spirits, whether they belong to bodies or not, whom the Lord has chosen, and caused to approach so near him, as to dwell and abide in his higher courts! They are fully *satisfied with the goodness of his house, even of his holy temple.* The saints are established as pillars in this temple of God, and shall go no more out. They approach him in their sublime methods of worship, without the medium of types and ordinances: They *see*

God *face to face*; 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Though ordinances in the church on earth are means of drawing near, yet in that very thing they are also tokens of some degree of estrangement. The saints above are constantly *before the throne*, or night and day serving the Lord, as it is expressed metaphorically; *Rev.* vii. 15. though in truth *there is no night there*; for they who dwell with God, dwell in light everlasting: They approach to their Maker in most pleasurable acts of worship, without any interposing cloud to hide his face from them, without clogs and fetters to hold them at a distance, without wanderings, without sins, and without temptations.

O blessed state! O glorious felicity! They behold the beauty of the Lord, transported in divine contemplation, infinitely various and immortal. They feed upon his goodness with all the raptures of refined love, and are held in long ecstasy under the permanent sensations of the love of God.

Yet in this state of perfect glory, there are doubtless some different degrees of nearness to God, and consequently there are different ranks and orders of blessed spirits. This is evident amongst the angels beyond all contradiction; for though all of them behold the face of God continually; *Matt.* xviii. 10. yet Gabriel seems to be a favourite-angel, standing in the presence of God, and employed in the noblest errands to men; *Luke* i. 19. And we read of seraphs and cherubs, angels and archangels, thrones, dominions, and principalities; which plainly exhibits to us a celestial hierarchy, or superior and subordinate ranks of glory and power.

And why may it not be so amongst the saints on high, those sons of Adam who are made like to angels? They are so many stars that shine with various degrees of splendour, as they are placed nearer to the Sun of Righteousness, and receive and reflect more of his beams. I might multiply arguments on this head, but I shall at present ask only these two or three convincing questions.

Can we ever imagine that Moses the meek, the friend of God, who was, as it were, his confident on earth, his faithful prophet to institute a new religion, and establish a new church in the world; who, for God's sake, endured forty years of banishment, and had forty years fatigue in a wilderness; who saw God on earth face to face, and the shine was left upon his countenance: Can we suppose that this man has taken his seat no nearer to God in paradise, than Samson and Jephthah, those rash champions, those rude and bloody ministers of providence?* Or can we think that St. Paul, the greatest of the apostles, *who laboured more than they all*, and *was in sufferings* more abundant than the rest; who spent a long life in daily services and deaths for the sake of Christ, is not fitted for, and advanced to a rank of blessedness superior to that of the crucified thief, who became a christian but a few moments, at the end of a life of impiety and plunder? Can I persuade myself, that a holy man, who has known much of God in this world, and spent his age on earth in contemplation of the divine excellencies, who has acquired a great degree of nearness to God in devotion, and has served him, and suffered for him, even to old age and martyrdom, with a sprightly and faithful zeal: can I believe that this man, who has been trained up all his life to converse with God, and is fitted to receive

* These expressions may be sufficiently justified, if we consider Jephthah's rash vow of sacrifice, which fell upon his only child; and Samson's rude or unbecoming conduct in his amours with the Philistine woman at Timnah, the harlot at Gaza, and his Delilah at Sorek, his bloody quarrels, and his manner of life. The learned and pious Dr. Owen, as I have been often informed by his intimate friend Sir John Hartopp, called him a rude believer. He might have a strong faith of miracles; *Heb.* xi. 22. but a small share of that faith which purifies the heart.

divine communications above his fellows, shall dwell no nearer to God hereafter, and share no larger a degree of blessedness, than the little babe who just entered into this world to die out of it, and who is saved, so far as we know, merely by the spreading veil of the covenant of grace, drawn over it by the hand of the parent's faith? Can it be, that the great Judge who *cometh, and his reward is with him, to render to every one according to his works*, will make no distinction between Moses and Samson, between the apostle and the thief, between the aged martyr and the infant, in the world to come?

And yet after all it may be matter of enquiry, whether the meanest saint among the sons of Adam, has not some sort of privilege above any rank of angels, by being of a kindred-nature to our Emmanuel, to Jesus the Son of God? But this leads me to the

Fourth degree of Blessedness.—IV. Let us stand still again, and wonder yet more at the blessedness of the man Christ Jesus in his approach to God.

1. His very union to God is habitual blessedness. He is constituted near to God by an unspeakable union. What joys, what unknown delights above our language, and above our thoughts, possess the holy soul of the man Jesus; for he is the nearest creature to the blessed God; for he is one with godhead; *John* x. 30. The son of David, according to the flesh, is joined in a personal union to the eternal God, and thus he *is over all, God blessed for evermore;* Rom. ix. 5.

There was a time indeed, when the divine nature so far withheld its influences, as to let him feel sorrows and sharp agonies, when he came to make himself a sacrifice for our sins, and exposed his holy nature to pain and shame: he consented for a season to have God absent, but cried out terribly under the present anguish of it, and shall have no more trials of this kind. Christ *being raised from the dead, dieth no more;* Rom. vi. 9. The man who was born of the virgin, shall now have the eternal Son of God for ever manifesting himself in him, and to him, according to this divine union.

This is that glorious piece of human nature, that one man, whom God has chosen, from all the rest of mankind, to bring so near to himself. This is that flesh, and that soul, which were chosen by God the Father's decree, from among all possible, and all future flesh and souls, to be made for ever one with God: and they are for ever one. This wonderous union has and must have everlasting pleasure in it, vastly beyond our nearest unions and approaches to God, even in our most exalted state in grace or glory. This is an approach to God indeed, and *blessed is the man whom thou hast thus chosen*, O Lord, and thus *caused to approach unto thee, that he may dwell, not only in thy courts, but in thy bosom*, in thyself for ever and ever: Blessed is this man, and may he be for ever blessed! *

2. His knowledge of God is much more intimate, more extensive, and more perfect, than any other creature can attain: for as he is exalted to the highest station and dignity that can belong to a creature, so we may be assured the all-wise God has furnished him with faculties of the noblest capacity, answerable to so exalted a station: and Christ has the highest advantage to fill all those capacities with incon-

* I know the word blessed, when it is applied to God or Christ, generally signifies, that they are the objects of our blessing or praise, and it is thus translated from the originals, ברוך or ευλογητος: But in our tongue this word signifies also happy, and the original words אשרי and Μακαριος are frequently rendered blessed, to signify happiness, as in my text. Though, if our translators had always observed the distinction, the precise sense of the original had better appeared.

ceivable treasures of knowledge, by dwelling so near to God, and being so intimately united to Divine Wisdom. The sublime furniture of his understanding is vastly superior to all that we know, or can know; for our union to God is but a distant copy, his is the bright, but inimitable original. Our nearness to God bears no proportion to that of the man Jesus; for his union to the godhead is of a superior kind. He has therefore a vaster comprehension of all truth, and a sweeter relish in the survey of it, than any created spirit, angelic or human; and thereby this part of his blessedness becomes far superior to theirs.

3. All the outgoings of his holy soul towards God, all his desires, his love, and delight, are more noble in their kind, and more intense in their degree, than those of any other creature. He who dwells so near to godhead, sees vastly more beauty, excellency, and loveliness in the Deity, than men or angels can do at their distance; and therefore his love is raised to unknown heights and raptures.

All his worship of the Father consists of nobler acts, and nearer approaches, than it is possible for any other creature to perform or partake of. Jesus, the man, worshipped here on earth, and he worships above in glory: He loves the godhead, as infinitely more amiable than himself; he trusts in it as more powerful; acknowledges God is above him in every glory, in every beauty infinitely superior to him; and this is divine worship; for a creature is still beneath God, and the acknowledgment of it is the worship due from him. Now Christ pays this acknowledgment with greater humility than the meanest worm of the race of Adam; for the nearer he is to God, the better he knows the true distance of a creature: and because he doth it with greater humility, therefore with sweeter delight; for the lower a creature lies before God, the nearer doth God approach it. *The High and Holy One, who inhabiteth eternity, and dwelleth in the high and holy place, dwelleth also with the humble soul;* Isaiah lvii. 15. But this leads me to a farther degree of the blessedness of the man Christ Jesus; and that is,

4. He hath a fuller, a richer, and a more transporting sense of the love of God, since God makes nearer approaches to him, and discovers more of his infinite goodness, and communicates more of his love. We may venture to say, that God loves the human nature of Christ better than he does any other creature; and this human nature has a stronger, and more intimate consciousness of the divine love, and a sweeter sensation of it, than saints or angels can have, because of the personal union between the son of man, and the eternal God: which union, though we know not precisely what it is, yet we know to be sufficient to give him the name Emmanuel, God with us; which distinguishes it most gloriously from all our unions to God, and raises his dignity, his character, and his advantages, even as man, to so sublime a degree above that of all other creatures.

By his exaltation, and his dwelling so near to God, his powers are inconceivably enlarged, and made capable of taking in higher degrees of felicity. Sights of God stretch the faculties of the soul, and enlarge it to receive more of God; this eternal sight has our Redeemer. We see the glory of God chiefly in the face of Christ Jesus his Son, but he sees the glory of God in his own face and brightness; Christ himself is *the brightness of his Father's glory;* Heb. i. 2, 3.

5. As Christ is the medium of our nearness to God, as he is the head of all those who approach to God, and the Mediator through whom all approach, so his bles-

sedness is above ours; for in some sense, and by way of eminence, he enjoys and feels all that we enjoy and feel, and vastly more too; for he is the medium through which we approach and we enjoy, as well as a person who himself, and for himself, approaches and enjoys: As when a stream of wine or living water is conveyed from the spring by a pipe or channel, the pipe has a tincture of the rich liquor as it flows; so, if it be lawful to illustrate things heavenly and divine, by things on earth, and to bring them down to our ideas by material similitudes, our Lord Jesus, who is authorized to confer life and joy on the saints, and through whom all grace, glory, and blessedness, are conveyed to them, feels, and tastes, and relishes, eminently and in a superior manner, all the joy and the blessedness that he conveys to our souls; and all better than we can do, for he is nearer the fountain; he takes a divine and unknown satisfaction in every blessing which he communicates to us. Besides all this, there are some richer streams that terminate and end in himself; the peculiar privileges and pleasures of the good man, while others flow through him, as the head, down to all his members, and give him the first relish of their sweetness.

When Christ, at the head of all the elect saints, shall at the great day draw near to the Father, and say, *Here am I, and the children thou hast given me;* those blessed ones whom *thou hast chosen, that they may approach unto thee* by me; I have often approached to thee for them, and behold I now approach with them to the courts of thy upper house. What manner of joy and glory shall this be! How unspeakably blessed is our Lord Jesus; and we rejoice with wonder!

This Sermon may be divided here.

Fifth, or supreme degree of blessedness.—V. Our admiration may be raised yet higher, if we make one excursion beyond all created nature, and lift our thoughts upward to the blessedness of the three glorious Persons in the Trinity.* All their infinite and unknown pleasures are derived from their ineffable union and communion in one godhead, their inconceivable nearness to each other in the very centre and spring of all felicity. They are inseparably and intimately one with God; they are eternally one God, and therefore eternally blessed; 1 John v. 7. *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one;* which text I believe to be authentic and divine, and that upon just reasons, notwithstanding all the cavils and criticisms that have endeavoured to blot it out of the Bible. Nor is their blessedness, or their nearness, a dull unactive state: Knowledge and mutual love make up their heaven, so far as mortals dare conceive of it, and so far as we have leave to speak of God after the manner of men.

First, Knowledge. An eternal blissful contemplation of all the infinite beauties, powers, and properties of godhead, and of all the operations of these powers in an inconceivable variety among creatures, is the glorious employment of God. His own knowledge of infinite truths, whether wrapt up in his own nature, or unfolded and displayed in his works, is a pleasure becoming the Deity; and each sacred Person possesses this unknown pleasure.

And besides the general glories of the divine nature, we may suppose, that a full and comprehensive knowledge of the sameness, the difference, the special properties,

* See the note toward the end of this part of the sermon, p. 140.

and the mutual relations of the three divine Persons, which are utterly incomprehensible to mortals, and perhaps far above the reach of all created minds, is the incommunicable entertainment of the holy Trinity, and makes a part of their blessedness. In reference to this mystery, God may be said to dwell in thick darkness; 1 *Kings* viii. 12. or, which is all one, in light inaccessible; 1 *Tim.* vi. 16. We are lost in this glorious, this divine abyss, and overcome with dazzling confusion: But the ever-blessed Three behold these unities and distinctions in the clearest light. *As the Father knoweth me, so know I the Father*, saith Jesus the eternal Son; *John* x. 15. And *as the spirit of a man knoweth the things of a man, so the things of God are known to his own Spirit*, for he *searcheth the depths of God;* 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11. as it is expressed in the original, τὰ βάθη τοῦ Θεοῦ.

But God's contemplation, or knowledge of himself, is not his only pleasure, for God is love; 1 *John* iv. 8. He has an infinite propensity toward himself, and an inconceivable complacence in his own powers and perfections, as well as in all the outgoings of them toward created natures. His love being most wise and perfect, must exert itself toward the most perfect object, and the chiefest good; and that in a degree answerable to its goodness too: Therefore he can love nothing in the same degree with himself, because he can find no equal good.

May we not therefore suppose the blessedness of the sacred Three to consist also in mutual love? May I call it a perpetual delightful tendency, and active propensity toward each other? An eternal approach to each other with infinite complacency? An eternal embrace of each other with arms of inimitable love, and with sensations of unmeasurable joy? Thus saith the Son of God, under the character of divine Wisdom; Prov. viii. 23, 30. *I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. Then was I by him as one brought up with him, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.* As the Father loveth the Son, so the Son loveth the Father. As the Father delights infinitely in his perfect image, so may we not venture to say, the Son takes infinite delight in the glorious archetype, and thus imitates the Father? Will not the expressions of the apostle Paul; *Heb.* i. 3. and the words of Christ himself; *John* v. 19, 20. encourage and support this manner of speaking? He *is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person: The Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth; and what things soever he seeth the Father do, these also doeth the Son likewise.* And this seems to be the first foundation of those glorious offices of raising the dead, and judging the world, which in the following verses are committed to the Son, *that all men may honour the Son as they honour the Father;* ver. 23.

As the blessed Three have an unknown communion in the godhead, or divine nature, so they must have an unspeakable nearness to one another's persons, an inconceivable in-being and in-dwelling in each other. *John* xiv. 10. I in the Father, and the Father in me. Each is near to the other two divine subsistences, and this mutual nearness must be attended with delight and felicity unknown to all but the blessed Three who enjoy it. O glorious and divine communion! The Father for ever near to his own image, the Son, and herein blessed! The Son never divided from the embraces of the Father, and therefore happy! The Spirit everlastingly near them both, and therefore he is the ever-blessed Spirit! And all these united in one godhead, and therefore infinitely and for ever blessed!

The Father is so intimately near the Son and Spirit, that no finite or created natures or unions can give a just resemblance of it. We talk of the union of the sun and his beams, of a tree and its branches: But these are but poor images, and faint shadows of this mystery, though they are some of the best that I know. The union of the soul and body, is, in my esteem, still farther from the point, because their natures are so widely different. In vain we search through all the creation to find a complete similitude of the Creator.

And in vain may we run through all the parts and powers of nature and art, to seek a full resemblance of the mutual propensity and love of the blessed Three towards each other. Mathematicians talk indeed of the perpetual tendencies, and infinite approximations of two or more lines on the same surface, which yet never can entirely concur in one line: And if we should say that the three Persons of the Trinity, by mutual in-dwelling and love, approach each other infinitely in one divine nature, and yet lose not their distinct personality; it would be but an obscure account of this sublime mystery. But this we are sure of, that for three divine Persons to be so inconceivably near one another in the original and eternal spring of love, goodness, and pleasure, must produce infinite delight. In order to illustrate the happiness of the sacred Three, may we not suppose something of society necessary to the perfection of happiness in all intellectual nature? To know, and be known, to love, and to be beloved, are, perhaps, such essential ingredients of complete felicity, that it cannot subsist without them: And it may be doubted whether such mutual knowledge and love, as seems requisite for this end, can be found in a nature absolutely simple in all respects. May we not then suppose that some distinctions in the divine Being are of eternal necessity, in order to complete the blessedness of godhead? Such a distinction as may admit, as a great man expresses it, of delicious society. "We, for our parts, cannot but hereby have in our minds a more gustful idea of a blessed state, than we can conceive in mere eternal solitude."

And if this be true, then the three differences, which we call personal distinctions, in the nature of God, are as absolutely necessary as his blessedness, as his being, or any of his perfections. And then we may return to the words of my text, and boldly infer, that if the man is blessed who is chosen by the free and sovereign grace of God, and caused to approach, or draw near him, what immense and unknown blessedness belongs to each divine Person, to all the sacred Three, who are by nature, and unchangeable necessity, so near, so united, so much one, that the least moment's separation seems to be infinitely impossible, and, then we may venture to say, it is not to be conceived: and the blessedness is conceivable by none but God!

This is a nobler union and a more intense pleasure than the man Christ Jesus knows or feels, or can conceive; for he is a creature. These are glories too divine and dazzling for the weak eye of our understandings, too bright for the eye of angels, those morning-stars; and they, and we, must fall down together, alike overwhelmed with them, and alike confounded. These are flights that tire souls of the strongest wing, and finite minds faint in the infinite pursuit: These are depths where our tallest thoughts sink and drown: We are lost in this ocean of being and blessedness, that has no limit, on either side, no surface, no bottom, no shore. The nearness of the divine Persons to each other, and the unspeakable relish of their unbounded pleasures, are too vast ideas for our

bounded minds to entertain. It is one infinite transport that runs through Father, Son, and Spirit, without beginning, and without end, with boundless variety, yet ever perfect, and ever present without change, and without degree; and all this, because they are so near to one another, and so much one with God.

But when we have fatigued our spirits, and put them to the utmost stretch, we must lie down and rest, and confess the great incomprehensible. How far this sublime transport of joy is varied in each subsistence; how far their mutual knowledge of each others properties, or their mutual delight in each others love, is distinct in each divine Person, is a secret too high for the present determination of our language and our thoughts, it commands our judgment into silence, and our whole souls into wonder and adoration.*

Thus we have traced the streams of happiness that flow amongst the creatures in endless variety, to their original and eternal fountain, God himself: He is the all-sufficient spring of blessedness, as well as of being, to all the intellectual worlds; and he is everlastingly self-sufficient for his own being and blessedness.

But are we not told in scripture, that *God delights in the works of his hands*, that *he takes pleasure in his saints*, that *he rejoices in Zion*, and *rests in his love* to his church; that Jesus Christ, even as man and Mediator, is the *beloved of his soul, in whom he is well-pleased?* Yes, surely, this is one way whereby he represents his own divine satisfactions in our language, and after the manner of men. But we must not imagine that he ever goes out of himself, and descends to creatures, as though he needed any thing from them, who are all before him as nothing, and less than nothing, and vanity. It is from his own wisdom, power, and goodness, as they appear in all his works, that his delight arises; and it is in these glories of his nature, and in the gracious purposes of his will, as they are manifested in his works, that the saints and angels, and all the happy ranks of being find their highest satisfaction. It is in the contemplation of God, and in the exercises and sensations of divine love, that all supreme felicity consists, so far as we are capable of being acquainted with it.

The only reflection with which I shall conclude the subject, is this, that communion with God, which has been impiously ridiculed by the profane wits of the last and the present age, is no such visionary and fantastic notion as they imagine; but as it is founded in the words of scripture, so it may be explained with great ease and evidence to the satisfaction of human reason. That it is founded in scripture, appears sufficiently in several verses of the xvii. chapter of St. John's gospel, where the divine union and blessedness of the Father and the Son, are made a pattern of our union to God, and our blessedness; *John* xvii. 21, 22, 23, 26. *That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they may be one in us:* And in this sense, but in a lower degree, even here on earth, *our communion, or fellowship, is with the Father, and with*

* This discourse was delivered about twenty years ago, and the reader will observe some warmer efforts of imagination than riper years would indulge on a theme so sublime and abstruse. Since I have searched more studiously into this mystery of late, I have learned more of my own ignorance: so that when I speak of these unsearchables, I abate much of my younger assurance; nor do my later thoughts venture so far into the particular modes of explaining this sacred distinction in the godhead. There appears to me good reason to doubt, whether there can be three distinct and different principles of consciousness, and three distinct and different wills in the one God, the one infinite Spirit. I was afraid to assert it in this sermon heretofore, and I am more afraid to assert it now. Reason and scripture join to teach me, that there can be but one God, and this God is a Spirit. What distinctions may be in this one Spirit, I know not: Yet, since I am fully established in the belief of the Deity of the blessed Three, though I know not the manner of explication, I dare let this discourse appear now in the world, as being agreeable so far to my present sentiments on this subject. A larger and more particular account of my most mature thought on the doctrine of the holy Trinity, may be seen in the last sermon of my third volume. *April* 8, 1729.

his Son Jesus Christ; 1 John i. 3. Though our communion with Christ includes also some particular varieties in it, which is not my present business to explain.

That this doctrine is exactly agreeable to reason, may be thus demonstrated:

We use the word communion, when two or more persons partake of the same thing. So friends have communion in one table when they dine together: Christians have communion in one sermon, in one prayer, or one sacrament, when they join together in those parts of worship: and the saints have communion with God, in blessedness, when they rejoice in the same object of contemplation and love. God surveys himself, he is pleased with his own glories, delights in himself as the highest and the noblest object; he trusts in his own right hand of power, he leans upon his own understanding, he rests in his own counsels and purposes, he feels, and he acknowledges all his own infinite perfections, and thus he enjoys them all. Thus also is our blessedness frequently set forth in scripture. It is our happiness to know God, to contemplate his glories, so far as they are revealed; to love him and his goodness; to trust in his wisdom, and lean securely on his strength; to feel the workings of divine powers and graces in and upon us, and to make acknowledgement of them all to God. Thus the image of God is restored to us in holiness and in happiness: Thus we are said to be holy as God is holy; and thus also we are blessed as God is blessed.

But though we are admitted to this amazing privilege, and hold communion with God, in the same object of contemplation and love, yet we must still remember, with humble adoration, that his holiness and his happiness, does infinitely exceed ours. The pleasures which arise from his knowledge and his love of himself, are as far above our taste, or all our ideas of blessedness, as heaven is higher than the earth, or as God is above the creature.

There is another sense also of this phrase, communion or fellowship with God, which has been used by many pious writers, when they make it to signify the same thing as converse with God; and this also depends upon our nearness, or approach to him: As when a christian, in secret, pours out his whole heart before God, and is made sensible of his gracious presence, by the sweet influences of instruction, sanctification, or comfort. When man speaks, and God answers, there is a sacred communion between God and man. *Isa.* lviii. 9. *Thou shalt call, and the Lord shall answer.* This holy David often enjoyed, and always sought after it. When the soul, in secret, complains of perplexity and darkness, and God is pleased to give some secret hints of direction and advice; when the soul mourns before God, confessing guilt, and the weakness of grace, and some divine promise is impressed upon the mind by the Holy Spirit, whence the christian derives peace of conscience, and strength to fulfil duty, and to resist mighty temptations: These certainly are seasons of converse or communion with God.

So when, in public worship, we address God with our souls in fervent prayer, and while we hear the word of God spoken to us by his ministers, we receive an answer to those prayers in the convincing and sanctifying impressions which the word makes upon the heart; this is also an hour of secret communion. So at the supper of the Lord, when with hope and joy we receive the bread and the wine, as divine seals of the faithfulness of God's covenant, and when we transact those solemn affairs also as seals of our faith and love, and our engagements to be the Lord's; we may properly be said to hold *fellowship, or communion with him.*

What swift advances of holiness doth the saint feel in his heart, and practise in his life, after such seasons of devotion! What glory doth he give to religion in a dark and sinful

world! What unknown pleasure doth he find in such approaches to God! And he moves swiftly onward in his way to heaven, by such daily receipts of mercy, and returns of praise. These are powerful motives that will make him persist in his holy practice and joy, in scorn of all the mockery and ridicule of a profane age of infidels. So the moon holds bright communion with the sun, the sovereign planet; so she receives and reflects his beams; she shines gloriously in a dark hemisphere, and moves onward sublime in her heavenly course, regardless of all the barking animals that betray their senseless malice.

This blessed privilege and pleasure of converse with God, which is enjoyed by the saints on earth, is doubtless the pleasure and the privilege of the *spirits of the just made perfect*, and of angels near the throne, but in a much higher degree: When they address the Majesty of heaven in the forms of celestial worship, and receive immediate and sensible tokens of divine acceptance; or when they take their orders and commissions from the throne for some particular errand, or high employment, and return again to make their humble report there: These are glorious seasons of converse with their Maker.

Much more glorious communion of this kind does the man Christ Jesus enjoy with God, in transacting all the vast and illustrious affairs of his commission; a commission large as the extent of his Father's kingdom, full of majesty and justice, terror and grace; a divine commission to govern, to redeem, and to save, or to punish and destroy millions of mankind, as well as to rule all his unknown dominions in the upper and nether worlds.

But in what manner this communion between the Father and Christ is maintained, we know not; nor can we guess in what manner, or in what degree such sort of converse or communion as this is practised, or is possible, between the three glorious Persons of the ever-blessed Trinity. These are mysteries wrapt up in sacred darkness, and the explication of them surrounded with dangers. A particular knowledge of these divine unsearchables, any farther than scripture has revealed them, is by no means necessary either to begin, or to maintain our state of grace. Let us content ourselves a few years longer with humble ignorance, and we shall have brighter discoveries in the future world, if it be necessary there to fulfil our happiness, and to complete our state of glory.

HYMN FOR SERMON XII.

THE SCALE OF BLESSEDNESS; OR, BLESSED SAINTS, BLESSED SAVIOUR, AND BLESSED TRINITY.

I.

ASCEND, my soul, by just degrees,
Let contemplation rove
O'er all the rising ranks of bliss,
Here, and in worlds above.

II.

Blest is the nation near to God,
Where he makes known his ways:
Blest are the men whose feet have trod
His lower courts of grace.

III.

Blest were the levite and the priest,
Who near his altar stood;
Blest are the saints from sin releas'd,
And reconcil'd with blood.

IV.

Blest are the souls dismiss'd from clay,
Before his face they stand:
Blest angels in their bright array,
Attend his great command.

V.

Jesus is more divinely blest,
Where man to godhead join'd,
Hath joys transcending all the rest,
More noble and refin'd.

VI.

But, O what words or thoughts can trace
The blessed Three in One!
Here rest my spirit, and confess
The infinite unknown.

TWO SERMONS

ON OUR APPEARANCE BEFORE GOD HERE AND HEREAFTER.

DELIVERED IN

SIR THOMAS ABNEY'S FAMILY, AT THEOBALDS, IN HERTFORDSHIRE,

At the Evening Worship, Nov. 25, and Dec. 9, 1716.

TO THE RIGHT WORSHIPFUL

Sir Thomas Abney, Knt. and Alderman of London.

Worthy Sir,

WHILE you were restrained by the laws of men from public worship in that way which you have chosen, I also suffered the same restraint, by the providence of God confining me to long sickness; during which time I enjoyed in your excellent family, many happy conveniences towards the ease of my affliction, and the recovery of my health.

I thought it therefore a necessary piece of christian gratitude, that some of the first-fruits of my labours should be devoted to your service; and with this view I attempted such meditations as might be well suited to my own circumstances of confinement, as well as to yours; that I might speak more sensibly from the heart to your spiritual advantage, and to the profit of all your houshold.

Since that time it has pleased the providence of God to take off your restraint entirely, by the repeal of that unrighteous law, and to give you the pleasures of his sanctuary; yet the review of these discourses, through the operation of the blessed Spirit, may renew some useful meditations, when offered from the press as a testimony of public thankfulness, and in this new form proposed to your perusal, by,

SIR,

Your most affectionate

And obedient servant,

Under many obligations,

I. WATTS.

THEOBALDS,
FEBRUARY 1, 1720.

SERMON XIII.

APPEARANCE BEFORE GOD HERE AND HEREAFTER.

PSALM xlii. 2.

WHEN SHALL I COME AND APPEAR BEFORE GOD?

THE FIRST PART.

THE holy Psalmist was now absent from his usual place of public worship, and restrained from coming near to the ark of God which was the token of the divine presence in the days of the Jewish church; and when he had been meditating on his past and present circumstances in this respect, both what he enjoyed heretofore, and what he was deprived of now, he breaks out into a divine rapture: *As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.* And he goes on to describe the frame of his spirit in this holy song: the substance and sense of the whole psalm is, as it were, epitomized and drawn up into these few words, *when shall I come and appear before God?* I shall not spend time to shew in how many senses man may be said *to appear before God;* but shall content myself to say, that in this place it signifies attendance on public-worship, in the place where it was usually celebrated and performed. In the words of the Psalmist we may find the temper of his heart expressed under these two general heads.

I. A belief of the special presence of God in his ordinances of public-worship.

II. An earnest longing after them on that account.

I shall enlarge a little on each of these, and make remarks as I go along, under each head.

First, The words express David's firm belief of the special presence of God in his ordinances, insomuch that he calls an attendance on them, an appearance before God. We are always in the view of God, and *every creature is naked and open* in his sight, and for ever appears before him as the all-seeing and all-knowing Creator and governor of all things; but it is a peculiar, a gracious, and favourable presence of God that belongs to his sanctuary; his appointed worship: God is taking special notice of our carriage toward him, and manifesting his designs of special mercy towards us.

David well knew this, that the great end of appointing public-worship, was, that there might be a communication between God and man, who were so dreadfully separated by sin; he knew the gracious promise, that where God *recorded his name, there would he come and meet his people, and bless them;* Ex. xx. 24. He knew what sensible tokens of divine presence were found in the sanctuary; there was *the ark of God, and the mercy-seat that covered it,* upon which God dwelt in a bright shining *cloud* between the golden *cherubims,* to signify his dwelling in light among the glorious angels in heaven; beside the many sweet experiences which David had of sensible discoveries of God in counsel and grace, strength and consolation, in his public worship.

And have not christians, under the gospel, as great a reason to expect the special presence of God among them in his ordinances? Are they not appointed on purpose to bring God near to us, and to bring us near to God? Have we not an express promise of God himself, dwelling in flesh, that *where two or three are gathered together in his name, he will be in the midst of them;* Matt. xviii. 20. and is not Christ worthy of credit? Have we not his word there published and preached? Doth not God appear there very eminently, in the glory of his truth, in the beauty of his holiness, in the purity of his commands, in the terror of his threatenings, in the sweetness of his promises, in the wonders of his wisdom and power, and more amazing works of his grace and love? Doth not the Lord discover himself there in the majesty of his government, in the miracles of his providence, and the divine glory of his fore-knowledge in prophecies exactly fulfilled? Surely that man must be blind indeed, who sees not God in the holy scriptures.

Will you say, "All this may be seen and read at home in private, as well as in a public assembly?" But you must remember that even the written word of God was communicated to the most part of mankind only in public worship, for some thousands of years: for before the art of printing was invented, one Bible was scarce to be found in several hundred houses, and very few of the common people were capable of reading; nor could they know the written word, but by their attendance on the public ministrations of it. And in our day, how many are there who either do, or will know very little of religion, but what they hear at church.

Besides, the written word of God is given to be expounded by his ministers, that the gospel being preached at large, and the truths of it being particularly applied, his presence and glory may appear therein. Many parts of scripture are so obscure, that God stands, as it were, behind a veil, or a curtain, till, in the ministry of the word, the sense is explained, the veil removed, and God stands forth to sight in the open glories of his majesty, or his mercy. It was for this purpose that Christ, at his departure from earth, engaged the promise of his presence with his ministers in the preaching of his gospel: *Lo I am with you always even to the end of the world;* Matt. xxviii. 20. And is not this sufficient ground for men to expect and hope to see God there?

Besides all this, have not christians enjoyed blessed experiences of the presence of God *in his sanctuary, in the assemblies of his saints?* One can say, "I was all darkness and ignorance, and there I found divine light, discovering to me my sin and misery, and his salvation." Another can say, "I was *dead in sin*, and found my soul raised to a divine life there; I was mourning and despairing, and there I found a word of support and holy joy, such as no mere words of men could convey into me; and I am forced to confess *God was in this place of a truth;*" 1 Cor. xiv. 25.

Remarks on the first head.—I. How much should we guard against hypocrisy in divine worship, because it is an appearance before God! We do then, in a solemn manner, set ourselves before God, and, as it were, humbly call God to look upon us, and take notice of our hearts. Let us remember this, every one of us, when we go to public worship, we do in effect say to God, "O Lord, we are always in thy sight, but in a special manner we now come to shew thee our hearts, to acquaint thee humbly with our wants, our sorrows, and our sins, our desires and hopes; and *God will not hold him guiltless that takes his name in vain: he is a jealous God, he will not be mocked;* Gal. vi. 7. *He is a Spirit, and he will be worshipped in spirit and in truth;* John iv. 24. He is

sharp-sighted, he sees through our souls, and knows the ends and designs of our coming, whether to see creatures, and be seen of them, or to see himself, our Creator: whether to observe the modes, dress, and behaviour of our fellow-creatures on earth, or to learn the will of God, and the mode of heaven. Suppose Jesus Christ, in his human nature, were there, whose *eyes are as a flame of fire*, and through your countenances can discern the most secret thought of your souls, would you not stand in awe of his majesty? would not this glorious appearance fix the most vain and fluttering imagination in a pious solemnity? How solicitously would you watch over your minds, lest they wander from worship! How carefully would you keep your hearts! Or suppose you saw the holy angels there which attend the churches in worship, would you not be ashamed to trifle in their presence? And has not the spiritual presence of the great God as much real, though invisible awfulness and majesty in it!

How do persons both of the polite and the vulgar world, all agree to dress fine and gay, and make the best figure of all the week, to appear before men on the day of the Lord! But let us remember that we come not only before men, but before the living God, in whose sight, ornaments of the body are of no account, and, O, what pains ought we to take, to put on our best ornaments of the mind! To see that our graces all shine, when we are to stand before God! And not to suffer one vain thought, one corrupt affection, to work in us; nor *a spot or blemish*, if possible, to be found upon us!

Alas! what millions of hypocrites have we in the world! How many may we fear in every congregation! How many come to attend at prayers, but never seek to join their own wishes and desires with the words of him who speaks! How many voices follow the tune in a psalm, but their souls feel no joy, no inward elevations of praise! How many hear the word as the word of man, and their hearts have no sense of God speaking to them! *They sit before God as his people, but their heart goes after their covetousness;* Ezek. xxxiii. 31. after their idols of business, or carnal pleasure, after every vain object of their eyes, or vainer images of the fancy. Let us take heed therefore, how we shut our eyes, or harden our hearts against a present and a speaking God; *for the word of the Lord is quick and powerful;* God speaking by his eternal word, or by his ministers in the sanctuary, pierces the secret recesses of the soul and spirit; God sits there, *discerning the intents and thoughts of the heart; all things are naked and open before his eyes with whom we have to do;* Heb. iv. 13.

II. Remark. In attendance on public worship, we should fix all our hope and expectation of profit upon the presence of God in it; for the design of ordinances is to bring us to *appear before God.* Now, if in things of this life, God should be our chief hope, much more in things of another; *Psal.* lxii. 5. *My soul, wait thou only upon God, my expectation is from him.*

How ready are we, even in spiritual concernments, to depend on outward forms and ceremonials! and to hope, or despair of success, according to some circumstantial attendants on worship! One is ready to say, "If it were a nice enquiry into some deep doctrine, I should get something by hearing the word." Another complains, "Alas! if it had been a sermon of grace and privileges, I had not been so careless in my attention, nor wasted my time." And a third satisfies his conscience with this, "If I had heard moral duties enforced powerfully on our practice, then I could profit by the preaching; or if he who ministers had but more skill in composing, more fervency of speech, more warmth in delivery, more graceful pronunciation, more strength of argument; surely I

should feel more lasting impressions of religion under every sermon." And thus we go on from week to week, and worship without any sensible benefit, because we seek all from men.

But, alas! if all these things were exactly suited to our wishes, the matter ever so agreeable, the manner ever so entertaining, the voice ever so charming, and the performance ever so affectionate; if God be not there, there is no lasting benefit: *Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God gives the increase;* 1 Cor. iii. 6. The ministration of the word is committed to man, but not the *ministration of the Spirit.* What can a man do to give eyes to the blind? To give ears to the deaf? Can a man make the lame to walk? or raise the dead to a divine life? and turn sinners into saints? *Who is sufficient for these things?*

A minister is ready to say, "When shall I preach to such a people! they would learn and profit by my sermons." A christian is ready to say, When shall I hear such a minister, or partake of such an ordinance, or hear a discourse on such a subject, managed in such a particular method? And they are ready to go away discouraged, as though all hope were gone, when they find a disappointment in the pulpit; as though the graces of God were confined to a particular instrument, or as though the words of a man were our only hope.

When any of us have been at church, and waited in the sanctuary, let us examine what did we go thither to see; a shadow of religion? An outside of christian forms? A graceful orator? The figures and shapes of devotion? Surely then we might with as much wisdom, and more innocence, have gone *to the wilderness to see a reed shaken with the wind.* Can we say as the Greeks at the feast; John xii. 21. *We would see Jesus?* Or, as Absalom; 2 Sam. xiv. 32. *It is to little purpose I am come to Jerusalem, if I may not see the king's face.* To little purpose we go to church, or attend on ordinances, if we seek not, if we see not God there.

III. Remark. What everlasting thanks are due to our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath made way for our *appearance before God* with comfort and hope! You are called by the name of christians, you profess to believe in him, but you know little what you have to do with him, or what use his name is of in religion, if you can go daily to appear in the presence of God without him; you know not the nature of christianity, if you do not feel a want of Christ when you bow yourselves before God.

Consider a little what God is, and what you are, that you may have a due sense of the necessity of Christ; say to yourselves, "I am going to appear before the great and glorious God, a God of infinite perfection, and I am a little vessel of mere imperfection and infirmity; what shall I do to stand in his sight? He is a God of majesty and judgment, and I a traitor, a rebel by nature and action; I want some person to introduce me into his favour. He is a God of spotless holiness, and I am defiled with a thousand sins; who shall make me appear lovely in his sight! he is a God of inflexible justice, and I a guilty wretch, a criminal, a malefactor, already condemned; who shall plead for me, and obtain a pardon?" O beg of Christ to introduce you with acceptance; in him alone can we appear well-pleasing to God: he is the beloved of the Father, and if we are ever accepted, it must be in *the beloved;* Eph. i. 6. Christ *appears now in the presence of God for us,* in the virtue of his blood and spotless obedience; *Heb.* ix. 12, 24. He who once appeared with sin imputed, *was made sin for us,* and was treated as a sinner in the

world for our sakes, now appears before God, without sin, in heaven, as our *great High Priest* and Surety, to make us acceptable to God there. Nor should our warmest devotions, nor our highest praises, dare to appear there without him.

Remember that the high priest himself among the Jews, was in danger of death, whensoever he went into the *holy of holies*, to appear before the tokens of the divine presence, if he had not proper garments upon him, and *the blood of atonement* with him; see *Exod.* xxviii. 35. 43. *Lev.* xvi. 2, 13, 14. Let Aaron be so clothed, and *the blood so sprinkled*, saith the Lord, *lest he die.* How much more may we fear destruction, if we rashly, or carelessly, come near and speak to God himself, and yet neglect the garment of righteousness, and *the blood of sprinkling*, and Christ our great Mediator.

Remember, O christian, that for a sinner to appear before God without the Mediator, is a thing of infinite terror, and not of comfort. A traitor would keep at the farthest distance from the prince, if he hath no friend to speak a word for him there. To come and present yourselves before God as sinners, without a Saviour, would be but to awaken his wrath, and put him in mind of your guilt, and his righteous vengeance. Remember therefore to take Christ with you when you come near to God. See Eph. ii. 3, 13, &c. *We are by nature children of wrath, and afar off from God*, it is he only can bring us near:—*No man cometh to the Father but by me;* John xiv. 6.

And as this is the only appointed way for sinners to appear before God, so it has been the sweet experience of ten thousand souls that they have drawn near to God, in this manner, with acceptance and delight. Hear what many a child of God can tell you in this case: "When I had the first sight of my guilt and defilements, and beheld God in the terrors of his holiness and justice, as *a consuming fire*, I was affrighted at the thoughts of appearing before him; every threatening that I heard, I thought it was pronounced against me, nor could I delight myself in the blessings of his gospel, for they were not mine. But when he was pleased to lead and draw me to Christ, I saw such an all-sufficiency of atonement and righteousness in him, that would answer all the demands that divine justice had upon me; I joyfully accepted of this salvation, I surrendered myself as the subject of his saving grace: and though now I behold God in the same glorious and dreadful attributes as before, and behold myself still defiled and sinful, yet I humbly dare appear before him daily and hourly, for Jesus is my intercessor, he is my *propitiation*, he is the Lord my righteousness, and my God sits upon a mercy-seat sprinkled with the blood of this heavenly sacrifice. My sins are many and great, and the matter of my daily groaning; I hear the threatenings and curses of his holy law, but they affright me not from his presence; for in the name of my Mediator I come, who hath borne the curse for me: with humble penitence, and with a lively faith, I draw near to a reconciled God, and give eternal thanks to the Reconciler."

IV. Remark. What a blessing it is to have many houses of God in the nation where we dwell, and those houses of God near us! God may say to us, as to Israel; *Deut.* xxx. 12. *Say not, who shall ascend into heaven to bring the word to us, that we may hear it?* Or, *who shall go over the sea?* &c. *for the word is very nigh to us.* We need not travel so far as the Jews, three times every year, to public worship; and yet they *went from strength to strength; till they appeared before God in Zion;* Psal. lxxxiv. 7. Consider some nations where God is not worshipped aright, and hath no dwelling-place; consider how far some poor creatures come even in this island, many miles from their own dwelling, to appear before God in his ordinances; but God seats his throne, as it

were at our doors; there are many synagogues of God in our land, for us to appear before him, and many near us in the city where we dwell, and near us too in this place of retirement.

How valuable a privilege is it to dwell in a religious family, in a house of God, where there is a *church in the house*, as *Phil.* ver. 2. where we often appear before God! How gladly would many persons (who are in better circumstances in the world than some of us enjoy) exchange those better circumstances for spiritual advantages such as we have; but some of you perhaps may say, "We may be saved without so much religion, without so much ado about the worship of God in families or in churches." Let me tell you, if a religious family be not a pleasure to you, heaven itself cannot afford you pleasure; for that is but one great religious family, of which Jesus Christ is the head: and if the business of that place be not your delight, you shall never have a place there.

Shall I ask the servants of this house, when you are called in to morning and evening prayer, what is your end? Do you come with hope and desire *to appear before God?* Or is it merely to obey the orders of the house, and comply with the custom of the family, for the sake of your temporal interest? Ask yourselves, my friends, what is it that brings you in constantly at the seasons of reading and praying? Is it a design to get near to God? Shall I ask the children, when you come in at the hour of worship, do you set yourselves as before God? Do your thoughts go along with the words of him who prays? Do ye attend to the word read, as the word of God, whereby you must be judged? Or do you satisfy yourselves to wear out the quarter of an hour, in sitting still, or in kneeling as others do, without thoughts of God? Shall each of us ask our own hearts, how do we pass the time of daily worship? Are we careful to lay aside all our thoughts of the world, that we may be at leisure for God? Remember, that not only in the morning and evening devotion, but at every meal we appear before God: Now, do we join in prayer for a blessing on our food and in giving thanks? Or do we think the word of one who speaks sufficiently sanctifies and blesses the meat for all who taste it?

Let us farther ask our consciences this one question, Do we remember God all the day, as those who have appeared before him at worship in the morning? Do we walk among men, as those who dwell in a house of God? Do we eat, and drink, and speak, and live, as those who profess so much religion and worship. Let us think on these things, and consider who there is among us that ventures to trifle with the great and dreadful God in such appearances before him? Or provoke him with a conversation unsuitable to such professions?

Blessed be God, there is more than the form of godliness found in the governing parts of this family! And I am persuaded, that not the parlour only, but the meaner rooms are witnesses of devotion and pious discourse: but we are none of us above the need of self-enquiry; and as we all appear with our bodies to worship God daily, methinks I would not have one soul among us absent from God in this daily worship.

Thus I have finished the first general head of my discourse.

Secondly. The words of the text discover to us an earnest longing after divine ordinances, and the presence of God in them. This abundantly appears also in several parts of this psalm: how mournfully doth the Psalmist complain, and what a painful sense he expresses of his long absence from the house of God! *verses* 3, 4. What a sweet and sorrowful recollection he makes of past seasons of delight in worship! *My*

tears have been my meat day and night,—my soul is cast down and disquieted, I remember when I went with the multitude to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise; but now God seems to have *forgotten me,* verse 9. How earnestly doth he breathe after the sanctuary! *Psal.* lxiii. and lxxxiv. to *see thy power,* O God, and *thy glory, as he had seen it there.* He borrows metaphors and similitudes from some of the most vehement appetites of nature to signify his strong desires after God; *my flesh thirsteth for thee, even fainteth for the courts of the living God.*

And this is the blessed temper of a christian, when in his right frame; he is never satisfied when quite restrained from divine ordinances, whether by persecution, by banishment, by the unreasonable laws of men, or by afflictions and weaknesses laid on him by the hand of God. He thinks over again those seasons wherein he enjoyed the presence of God in worship, and the recollection of them increases his desires of their return. He watches every turn of providence, and hopes it is working towards his release: when he sees the doors of his prison begin to open, he is ready to break out of confinement, and seize the pleasure of public-worship: he thinks it long till he appears before God again. "I have chosen God, saith he, for my highest good, for my everlasting portion, and I would willingly often resort to the place where God hath promised to communicate his blessings, and where I have so often *tasted that the Lord is gracious.*"

Remarks on the second head.—I. How very different are they from the temper of David, who enjoy public ordinances continually, and are weary of them? Who appear before God frequently on the Lord's day, and yet cry, *what a weariness is it! When will the Sabbath be gone?* Mal. i. 13. and iii. 14. *Amos* viii. 5. When shall we return to the world again?

What is the reason of this great aversion to divine worship among those who call themselves christians? Truly the greatest part have nothing of christianity besides the mere name: some are stupid sinners, and have no sense of divine things; and they think it is all lost time: they have no need to come before God, but that it is the custom of their country, or of the family where they live, and they must do it; they do not know how to spend the hour elsewhere without reproof and censure: Or they come merely to see, and to be seen, as is the fashion of the land.

Some perhaps have a sense of religion, and yet they cannot look upon God any otherwise than as their enemy, and so they come before him without any love or delight in his company; and then no wonder if they are weary of it. They do not come as friends to take pleasure in his presence; they would be well enough pleased, if they could live for ever in this world, and never have any thing to do with God: their chief motive is the fear of hell, and therefore they drudge on in toilsome and undelightful religion.

And indeed this is one great reason why so many true christians feel no more longing after God, either in public or in private worship; because, though they have some faith and some cold hope, yet they are contented to abide in this state of uncertainty, without joy or assurance, and do not make it their business to advance in christianity: they cannot rejoice in God as their father, or their friend, with a lively soul; and they find but little pleasure in his house. But it is a divine pleasure, and a-kin to heaven, when a child of God, with a lively faith and joyful spirit, comes before God as his God, and entertains himself with all the blessed discoveries that he makes of his wisdom and

grace in his churches, with all the promises of the covenant, with all the words of love that God hath written in his book, or publishes in his ordinances by the ministry of men. He feeds upon heavenly provisions in his Father's house; and when he departs, he maintains on his soul a sweet savour of heaven. But, alas! there is a great withdrawment of the Spirit of God from his churches; a deadness of heart has seized believers in our day, and they grow carnal: O pray that the Spirit may return to the sanctuary again!

II. Remark. How comfortable a thing would it be, to feel our souls longing for divine ordinances more earnestly after restraint! We should learn the language of Jonah, when in the belly of the whale; Lord, *I am cast out of thy sight, yet I will look again toward thy holy temple;* Jonah ii. 4. I will look while I am at a distance, and pray toward the mercy-seat, in hope and desire to come near the sanctuary.

We are too ready to grow indifferent, and think we can do well enough without this appearing before God! We grow, as it were strangers to him by long absence; and though the sacred correspondence in public be lost, yet sometimes it is not much regretted: this is a frequent distemper of the soul. When fasting increases a regular appetite, it is a sign of a healthy constitution; but weakly natures are so overwhelmed with a little fasting, that their appetite is gone too. Many christians may complain of this, and say, "Though I find some relish of pleasure when I am in the house of God, and amongst his saints; and though it was very painful to me to endure the first months of confinement, yet a long restraint has brought me under the spiritual disease, that my appetite and desire grow feeble, and my heart too indifferent to public worship."

Now in order to enquire into the temper of our spirits, and to awaken us to greater longings after divine ordinances, let us consider what are the two chief ends of a christian in his appearance before God: it is either to do something for God by a public profession of his name among men, or to receive something from him in order to our own comfort and salvation. If we hope to receive, this calls faith into exercise; if we endeavour to do something for his service, this awakens our zeal. Now, is our faith active? Is our zeal lively in this matter? Some christians have one of these, some the other most in exercise: some look most at honouring God in a public profession, some at obtaining some sensible benefit and delight to their own souls: but it is best when both of these invite us to the sanctuary, and make us long after the presence of God.

Some of us, it may be, have found the work of grace and salvation begun on our souls at public worship; there we were first awakened and convinced of sin, there we were first led to the knowledge and faith of Christ, and pardoning grace was revealed with power by the ministry of the word; therefore we long after the *sincere milk of the word,* in the same public dispensation of it, *that we may grow thereby.* Others have been favoured, it may be, with the presence of God more abundantly in secret; and reading, and meditation, and secret prayer, have been the chief sensible instruments of their conversion, sanctification, and peace; these therefore, sometimes have not the same earnest longing after public preaching as others have; yet they do continually attend on the ordinances of Christ in public, to maintain religion, in the profession of it, among men; and they ought to do it. But these persons are most in danger of growing cold and indifferent.

I grant it is a glorious and self-denying temper, to maintain a warm zeal to do much for the honour of God in the world, even though we enjoy but little of him; but this is

not so frequent among men: for we are usually drawn to God by the blessings we hope to receive; and we should consider, that an utter neglect of all those enjoyments of God in the sensible increase of grace and joy, which are to be found in public worship, is a sign that our faith runs too low: we do not expect to receive much from God, even in his own appointed methods; and therefore we grow negligent whether we worship him in public or not. O let the soul who feels nothing of this negligence, but maintains a warm desire of ordinances under long restraint, rejoice and bless the Lord!

However, while any of us are confined, our desires after God ought to appear in this, that we often seek him in secret, and are perpetually with him in our thoughts; that we take all proper opportunities to lift up our souls to him in the midst of common affairs, and thus do what we can to make up the loss of the sanctuary: but we should be still breathing also after church-worship, and the communion of saints; for *God loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob;* Psal. lxxxvii. 2.

III. Remark. O what unhappy clogs these fleshly sinful bodies are to the mind! How they contradict the best inclinations, of the soul, and forbid it to fulfil its spiritual desires! The soul would appear often before God, but the flesh forbids: the spirit would rejoice to be among christian assemblies, but the body is too often confined by sickness, or by the necessary cares that relate to this life, this poor animal life, that has so troublesome an influence upon the noblest enjoyments of the mind.

The soul would wait upon God whole hours together in praising, in praying, in hearing the word; but the body is weak, overwhelmed with a little attention, and can bear no more. The soul wrestles and strives against the infirmities of the flesh, and labours hard to abide with God; but these very wrestlings and strivings overcome languishing nature; the impotence of the flesh prevails against the sprightliest efforts and vigour of the mind; the flesh prevails, and the spirit must yield. Thus we are dragged down from the holy mount of converse with God, and the soul, who is a-kin to angels, and employed in their work, must descend, and lie idle, to refresh the animal. In vain would the spirit raise all its powers into lively and devout exercise, if the flesh grows faint under a warm affection, it is forced to let go the holy thought, and quit the divine pleasures of religion, until a better hour return.

Sometimes, through drowsiness, and want of natural spirits, we grow stupid and heavy in religions duties, and have but little sense of that God before whom we appear. Sometimes, through excess of spirits, our imagination grows vain and fluttering, and wanders far away from the God whom we worship. If we fix our thoughts one minute upon things of the highest importance and the most awful solemnity; the next flying idea catches the mind away, and it is lost from God and devotion again; we appear before God, and disappear again; we wander into the world, and return to God, twenty times in an hour.

Our eyes and our ears are constant witnesses of this painful weakness; and unhappy instruments they are to draw off our souls from the divinest meditation. Every thing around us is ready to disturb and divert our feeble nature in the most heavenly acts of worship: poor broken worship! Poor frail estate of human nature! But there is a blessed assembly of better worshippers above: awake our faith and desire to join them! and let each of us say, "*O when shall I go* to that bright company, *and appear* amongst them *before God.*"

SERMON XIV.

APPEARANCE BEFORE GOD HERE AND HEREAFTER.

PSALM xlii. 2.

WHEN SHALL I COME AND APPEAR BEFORE GOD?

THE SECOND PART.

BY an appearance before God, in the text, we are to understand our attendance upon him in the public ordinances of worship; and the longing desire the Psalmist had to draw near unto God in his ordinances, represents to us the character of every sincere christian, when he enjoys his own right frame, and heavenly temper of soul: he longs, he breathes after those seasons of divine improvement and comfort.

I shall make no further repetition of any thing before delivered; but considering that all our appearances before God in this world in his sanctuary, are but means to prepare us to stand before God in the world that is to come; I shall not think myself at all to wander from the text, if I spend my whole time, at present, in shewing the difference that is between our appearance before God on earth here, and our appearing before him in the other world hereafter; and this is in order to awaken the sinner, and to encourage the true christian.

There are two great future appearances before God, the one at judgment, and the other in glory in heaven: the one belongs to all men, the other only to the saints. And now, that I may divide my discourse aright, and *give to every one their portion*, I would beg leave chiefly to apply our general appearance before God at judgment, to those who are unconverted, and in a state of sin; for we have reason to fear that there may be some such among us: and I will apply the blessed appearance before God in heaven to converted souls, to whom only it belongs: these are the persons who have faith and love, and are in some measure prepared to appear and worship there.

First then, Let us consider our appearance before God in judgment. It is true, at the moment of death our souls immediately stand before God to be judged, as well as our souls and bodies united, shall stand together there in the great day of the resurrection; yet I shall not make any distinction of these seasons now, lest I should multiply particulars; but shall treat of them together, to awaken the secure and sinful worshipper, who appears before God here in the form of devotion: and to put him in mind he must, ere long, stand before God in another manner than now he does, and to set his thoughts at work to compare one with the other in these particulars;

1. The sinner now appears with some degree of willingness in the presence of God, then it is under a terrible constraint. A wicked man may be willing to come to public ordinances for many carnal ends, as to comply with his superiors, to follow the custom of the family where he dwells, to gain reputation among men, to satisfy the cries of an awakened conscience; for his conscience, perhaps, will not be easy without the per-

formance of some duties; and so he makes use of divine worship; and his public appearances before God, as a kind of opiate, to stupify an uneasy conscience, and therefore he has some inclination and willingness to come before God here on earth: but at death, and at the general resurrection, he must appear whether he will or no. Heb. ix. 27. *It is appointed for all men once to die, and after death the judgment.* Rom. xiv. 10. and 2 Cor. v. 10. *We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. The angels shall gather the elect* from the four quarters of the world, and bring them near to the Judge with pleasure; but sinners shall be dragged toward that awful tribunal, and be forced to abide the trial.

While the believer, who walks in lively faith, says, "*When shall I come* into that world of spirits, *and appear there before God?*" the sinner wishes that day may never come: "O that I might live for ever on earth! that I might for ever converse with men, and never see the face of that God who hates me, and whom I have never loved. O that death might make an utter end of me! O that the grave would cover me for ever, that I might rise no more." And when that dreadful day comes, then, "*Fall on us, rocks; then, mountains press us down, and conceal us for ever from the wrath of God and the Lamb:*" as in *Rev.* vi. 15, 16. that outcry is represented. But they must stand and see the terror; they are constrained to hear the glorious and dreadful sentence. Dost thou believe this, O my soul! and canst thou be content to live unprepared for the solemnities of this day?

2. Here sinners appear like the saints of God, in disguise; but there as sinners, openly guilty, and exposed to light: here not separated from the saints in the place of worship, there sufficiently distinguished and divided from all who love God, and that worship him in spirit; for when a sinful soul goes out of the body to appear before God, every angel in heaven knows him; he is naked without a covering of disguise, as well as without the covering of a justifying righteousness; and upon this account he appears all guilty, not only before the searching eye of God, and the terror of his anger, but also before the blessed spirits who are near the throne. Here those who are in the same assembly, know not whether we are the children of God, or *the children of the devil;* but in the world of spirits, all the children of Satan are as much distinguished from the children of God, as an angel of light is from a spirit of darkness.

This flesh is a disguise to the soul, a thick cloud to cover a thousand hypocrisies; but at the great day the naked soul must be known; *All nations shall be gathered before him, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats;* Matt. xxv. 32. Jesus shall separate the one from the other: and what will the sinner say at that day? "I have on earth appeared before God among the saints, but now I must for ever dwell with my companions in iniquity, with my partners in *everlasting burnings;* I am so like to the spirits of hell, now I am undressed, and divested of all disguise, that I see myself justly divided for ever from the saints, and a fit companion for none but devils." O who can tell the torment that is contained in such a self-condemning reflection as this?

3. Sinners appear now, and take no notice of God as Creator, or Christ as Mediator and Saviour; but at the appearance in judgment it will be impossible to stand before God, and not take notice of him. He appears there as a God of terrible and incensed majesty, and they must see him; and Jesus Christ sits there, and must be seen, not as the Saviour to secure them, but the Judge ready to condemn them to everlasting punishment; *Rev.* i. 7. assures us of this day, and speaks of it as already come; *Behold, he*

cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. I shall behold him, says the wretched Balaam, *but not nigh;* Numb. xxiv. 17. not as my God, near me, but as my enemy, afar from me. "Now God speaks with the voice of mercy in the church, and I turn a deaf ear to him, may the sinner say, but then it is the language of justice and vengeance: O that my ears and my eyes were sealed up for ever! for his looks, his words, his actions, smite my soul through with a thousand torments."

It is impossible for the wicked to turn their eyes from God in that day, whereas now for a whole hour or two, in his worship, their hearts are not once fixed upon him. A God of holiness will be seen on his seat of judgment; and the sinner who *will not see, shall see*, and be confounded at the sight. Think of this, O my soul! and when thou findest thy thoughts wandering from God in the next duty of worship, take this awful hint to recal them again.

4. Now the sinner appears before God as on a throne of grace; there on a throne of justice: now in a state of trial: there for a final sentence. He comes now to hear the general language of God to men; there to hear his own particular judgment from the same God: now the sinner stands in the church, in a general assembly; and he stands within the reach of a general promise: *He that believes shall be saved; he that confesses, and forsakes his sin, shall find mercy:* but then the book of all the promises is for ever shut, and it is declared by the Judge, that not one of them belongs to him: he hath refused all the offers of grace, and the day of grace is gone for ever.

Now he stands, and hears the general threatening of the word: *The soul that sinneth shall die; the wages of sin is death; he that believeth not shall be damned; he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption:* yet he may escape all these threatenings. But in the great and last day he hears his own name, as it were, read together with each of these threatenings, and united to them all: "Thou art the impenitent sinner, and thou must die for ever; thou hast not believed in Christ, and thou art the person who shall be for ever damned."

Now he appears before God, and though he is, as to his state, at a distance from him, yet he may be converted and brought near; he hears these blessed words; Matt. xi. 28. *Come, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* Isaiah xlv. 22. *Look unto me, ye that are at the ends of the earth,* and in immediate danger of hell, *and be ye saved.* But there the only word is, *depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire;* for I have not one word of promise, of encouragement, or of comfort for you.

Because he appears now in a state of trial, it is with some hope of obtaining pardon; but there he stands only waiting for the sentence of death, and therefore with everlasting despair: he appears there guilty in open light, and his condemnation is certain and unchangeable.

Believe this, sinner, now in this life; the wrath of God lies heavy upon you; *John* iii. 36. but this wrath may be removed; the condemnation that is now upon you from the law, may be reversed: the gospel is ready to take it off, if you receive this gospel: but there, before the judgment seat, every soul who is found in his sins, falls under an eternal curse, and without repeal: that condemnation shall never be removed; for immediate execution follows upon the sentence. Now the sinner appears before God, and hears such words of compassion as these are: "I delight not *in the death of a sin-*

ner, I would have him *turn and live;* I propose the method of reconciliation and life;" but then the Lord sits upon a throne of judgment, and he shall laugh at the calamity of the wicked, and the obstinate sinner's distress; for pity and compassion are for ever hid from his eyes. Now, who is there among us able to bear the sight of a provoked God, who is infinite in power, terrible in majesty, and has abandoned all compassion?

5. The sinner now appears often before God; there but once, and is for ever driven from his presence: here, if you meet with no comfort from God in one ordinance, you may find it in the next; but then you shall be *punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power;* 2 Thess. i. 9. How will you long for such seasons again, when you are for ever shut out from them! "O that I had but one Lord's-day more to spend in the service of God! how would I labour and wrestle with God in prayer, that I might become a new creature!" But in hell the days are all alike, they are all dark and stormy; there is not one day of sunshine, not one sabbath, not one hour of rest. "How did I mock God on earth, must the sinner say, when I appeared before him! and after I had mocked him once, I trifled again and again; but now I find he is a God who will not be mocked; I see he is a terrible majesty, and I am driven for ever from all his grace and compassion, and shall see his face no more."

Use. All the use that I shall make of this head, is only to urge upon your minds a practical belief, and a lively sense of this appearance before God at judgment. Must we all stand *before the judgment seat of Christ?* Do we think we are ready? What answer do our own consciences give, when we make that inquiry? Am I prepared to appear before God the Judge? Have I but little hope, and yet can I satisfy myself to lie down at night, and arise in the morning, and have this hope not increased? Have I so little expectation of my appearing well there, and yet rest contented under it?

Do I worship now with that sincerity and devotion, as those who must hereafter come to be judged? Could we, dare we, indulge ourselves in the neglect of any duty, or commission of any sin, or careless performance of the religious services we owe to God, at the rate we now do, had this great appearance before God at judgment been often upon our thoughts? Alas! these things vanish from our minds, many times, together with the breath and air that forms the words: business, or cares, or the diversions of this life, turn away the soul from God and judgment. We dwell in flesh, we see not God, and we are ready, foolishly, to imagine that we shall never see him: we thrust this hour at such a distance, as though it would never come; we put it afar off as an evil day.

But let us stand still here, and consider a little: this evening we are come to appear before God in worship; we see ourselves here, and see each other: we are sure it is a reality, and not a dream; yet seven years ago, this evening was at so vast a distance from us, that we scarce knew how to realize it to our thoughts, and make it, as it were, present: but now all that long distance is vanished, and this evening is come; those days are all passed, and this hour is upon us. Thus it is in the case of death and judgment. Seven years hence, it is most likely, some one or more of us, and perhaps every one of us, shall appear before the bar of God our Judge; that appointed hour will come, however it seem afar off now; and then it will be as real an appearance as this present hour is, but a much more solemn one; we shall see and feel ourselves there, and know it is not a dream, but an awful reality.

Consider further, that it can be but a few seven years more, before every one of us must certainly appear at the judgment-seat of God; and as long as those years seem

now, yet they will quickly fly away, and the last hour will be upon us. Think how many of your acquaintance, in seven years past, have made their appearance before God, have past their final trial, and received their everlasting sentence: and each of us may say, "Why should not I be the next? What is there in my nature, or in my circumstances, that can secure me against the summons of death and judgment?" It may be but a few days before we are called; and is every one of us here ready? This is a question of infinite importance, and let us not give rest to our souls, till we can answer it to our satisfaction.

O how should we live! how should we act! how should we speak! how should we worship! if this were always upon our hearts! O that we could but realize these awful things to our minds, and make them more familiar to our thoughts daily! Could sinners then be one day contented without converting grace, and without a justifying righteousness? Could they any longer refuse the mercy of the gospel, and Jesus the Saviour? Could they be satisfied to appear all guilty before God, and no friend there to speak for them? no intercessor to plead for them? none to undertake their cause? Could they go on to sin with a negligent mind, if they thought the judgment-door just opening upon them, and Jesus Christ at hand? Could it be possible we should have such cold and lazy desires after a Saviour and his salvation, if we thought our everlasting happiness or misery depended upon the next day, the next hour, or the next moment? For we know not how soon the summons may come, and state us before his tribunal.

II. The *second* part of my discourse leads me to consider the blessed difference that there shall be between a christian's appearing before God in heaven, and his appearance here in divine ordinances before God on earth; and by a comparison of these two, may the Spirit of God awaken our faith, our hope, our love, and our joy, and all join to promote our sanctification! The differences then between our standing before God in worship now, and our worshipping before God in heaven, are such as these:

1. Now the true christian appears in a mixed assembly of saints and sinners: there the assembly is all holy, and not one sinner amongst them. Here sincere souls and hypocrites meet together in worship; there the hypocrite is for ever banished. In the houses of God, on earth, the wicked Canaanites will mingle with the children of Israel; but in his temple, in heaven, every one is an Israelite indeed; *There shall no more be found a Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts;* Zech. xiv. 21.

The children of God here, are under a veil of infirm and sinful flesh, and in the likeness of sinners; there they are unveiled, and acknowledged to be *the sons and daughters of the Almighty;* 1 John iii. 1, 2. *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! But the world knows us not;* nay, we are not many times known to ourselves; but when he comes whom we have trusted, then he shall be known and distinguished from the world, as God's only begotten Son; and we shall be known and distinguished as the children of God, all related and a-kin to him: *When he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is;* 1 John iii. 2. and shall sufficiently be distinguished from all who belong not to Christ.

Here a child of God, in the sanctuary, is deeply humbled at the mention of the name of God; but his humility is not seen. Here his zeal kindles at the proposal of a duty, but it burns with a hidden flame: here his love is at work, his hope is arising, his joy is getting up to heaven, when he is engaged in the meditation of a comfortable promise, or some of the blessed privileges of the children of God; while those who are around him,

even his next neighbour who sits close to him, knows nothing of the holy workings of his heart, and the breathings of his soul towards God: but there the whole assembly shall worship with one heart, and one soul, and not one wandering worshipper, or one wandering thought in worship.

We are ready to complain here, that we ourselves know not whether we shall be accepted or no; through the weakness of faith, want of holiness, decay of zeal in our spirits, and that degeneracy we sometimes find and feel in ourselves, we are often ready to doubt, and almost upon the borders of despair. This is the case of many a poor, trembling christian; but there every one shall worship with strength of joy, liveliest delight, and warmest zeal and affections: and be assured his graces are all true, for he shall see them all in the light of glory.

This suspicion or jealousy of ourselves, flattens our devotion many a time here, and takes away the pleasurable sensations of religion, because we ourselves know not whether God accepts us or no: there a full assurance of our being beloved of God, and being for ever accepted of him, shall make every exercise of devotion a most agreeable and perfect pleasure. O my soul, how should it quicken thy race, and exalt thy joy, to think how fast thou art removing from this world of sinners, and from all thy own doubts and fears, to a glorious assembly of holy souls, where not one doubt or fear shall remain in their consciences, nor in thine!

2. In this world the saint appears among a few to worship his God, but then among millions. Now many times we have worshipped in a secret corner, for fear of men; but then it is all in public glory; for there all the worship that is paid, is the established worship of the whole country; and honours, and kingdoms, and wealth, are all on that side: all the inhabitants are made rich for ever, with the riches of heaven: and all the children of God are the sons and daughters of a king, and all heirs and possessors of glory, and reign together with the Lord Jesus; *Rom.* viii. 17. 2 *Tim.* ii. 12.

Here many times the children of God are forced to be separatists from their neighbours and fellow-citizens, they are divided from the multitudes and crouds of mankind, they are but a *little flock;* but there they shall shine in the midst of the *general assembly of the first-born, and a great multitude which no man can number;* Rev. vii. 9. that with victories and songs are for ever addressing the throne of God and the Lamb. O when shall I hear the voice from heaven say, *Come up hither?*

3. Now we worship in a way of preparation; there for enjoyment and full delight. Ordinances here are but slight shadows, and very faint and imperfect resemblances, of what the worship in heaven shall be. Now the word of God is spoken by a man, and it loses much of the divinity and power, by the means of conveyance; there it will be spoken by God himself to our spirits, or by our Lord Jesus Christ, to the ears of our bodies, raised, sanctified, and immortal; and our souls shall receive as much of the express ideas, as God designs to convey by all his conversation with that sanctified number: nor shall they miss of any of the beauty, or spirit, or perfection, of those thoughts which God himself would impress upon us.

Now in the letters of the Bible we read the good-will and mercy of God to sinners; but there, in a far brighter manner of conveyance; *in thy light we shall see light;* Psalm xxxvi. 9. Here we seek the Father and the Son; the one as our happiness, the other as the way to the enjoyment of that happiness, as they are usually represented in the word of God: there we shall say, We have *found him whom our souls*

desire and love, and shall be for ever happy in his presence." Our business now in this world is to get a right temper and frame: there to practise and indulge the joy. Happy souls, who are thus prepared in the outer courts to draw nigh and worship *within the veil!*

Now we appear with imperfect services, and poor improvements, there with glorious and complete worship: for here *we see God but as in a glass darkly;* there *face to face;* 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Now we can have his glory, or his grace represented to us but in part, in a small measure, and according to our poor capacities of receiving; there *we shall see him as he is, and know as we are known.*

What are our prayers, what are our praises here? our praises when offered up in a song, or in plainer language, in comparison with those that are paid to God above? Now we speak of him *whom we have not seen,* therefore we speak in so imperfect a manner: there we shall hear and speak of him whom we see and know more intimately: now we appear before God, and bring too much of the world with us: there we *leave the world, and go to the Father.* God and Christ are too much forgotten, or they are too often thrust out of our minds by vain thoughts, even when we ourselves are never so desirous to spend an hour or two with God; what interruptions do we find! What long blanks divide the several petitions of our prayer, and break off the meditation while we stand before God to worship him! We have many enemies within and without, who stand ready to seize away our souls from God, and to rob him of our devotion: vain fancies call us aside, and our senses turn off our minds from heaven. There shall be everlasting worship above, without one impertinence interposing; no trifles there to divert us, and separate one part of our worship from the other: there all the powers and faculties of nature shall perpetually be engaged in the business and blessedness of that state. Glorious worship, and blessed worshippers! fit for the presence of the Majesty of heaven!

5. I might say, We come with very little comfort, and many discouragements, to appear before God on earth; but there with everlasting consolation. We come now to the word, and we go away again, hardly hearing the voice of God in his word, or seeing his countenance, but there we shall be for ever near him; no wall of flesh, or of sin, to divide us.

Now we are defiled with guilt, and ashamed to lift up our faces towards heaven, and blush even when our hearts are never so sincere; but there we shall come near to God, even to God in glory, and not be afraid of him; there we shall see a God undefiled, ourselves also being undefiled; a God of spotless purity, and ourselves without blemish *before the throne;* our *garments washed* white *in the blood of the Lamb,* and never, never to be defiled again; that is the glory and pleasure of a christian. Then we shall appear *without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing;* without guile in our mouths, or vanity in our hearts; *without fault before God,* and therefore without pain; without sorrow, and without fear for ever, even though we stand before God in all his majesty; for we are assured of his mercy. Now we worship with prayers and tears, because of many and heavy burdens, sorrows, and sins; but *then with everlasting songs and joy on our heads;* Isaiah xxxv. 10. If we had a painful and living sense of these things, of the wanderings, temptations, burdens, and defilements that mingle with our worship here, we should cry aloud, and say, *How long, O Lord, how long!*

6. *Lastly.* Now we appear and depart again, but then we shall abide with God for

ever. Now we go down from the mount of converse with God, into the world of temptation, and sin, and business, and care: we appear upon mount Horeb, or Pisgah, and we take a little view of the promised land; but we go down again, as the children of Israel did, to fight with the Canaanites, the giants that are in the valley, our mighty sins, our strong corruptions. In this valley of tears we must have a conflict before we get to the promised land; there every worshipper has in his hand a palm of complete victory; *Rev.* vii. 9. and he is for ever discharged from fighting: *Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God: and he shall go no more out;* Rev. iii. 12. So necessary is the presence of the saints in heaven, that our Lord Jesus Christ has represented them as pillars of that building. God dwelling in the midst of his saints, counts himself dwelling in one of his glorious heavens; and every saint there, is, as it were, a pillar, and a support of it: we are *lively stones* in that building in which God will for ever inhabit. Now we come to the house of God as visitants; but there as inhabitants, as the *children* of God, who *abide for ever in the house:* there every saint obtains what holy David wished for, and that in the literal perfection of it, that he might *dwell in the house of the Lord for ever;* Psalm xxvii. 4. and xxiii. 6.

Use. The only reflection I shall make on the second part of my discourse, is this, that we should raise our hope, our consolation, and our joy, by a meditation of such future worship in heaven, as this is, when we lie under many weaknesses, restraints, and defilements, in our best worship on earth. O! how would this hope rejoice our hearts, if we could but live upon it! What secret comfort would it be to a poor humble soul, who is hindered from drawing near to God in worship now, because his affections are perpetually ready to wander, to think that he shall come and appear before God hereafter, and see him without ceasing, and his thoughts shall never wander from his God! When he complains under the temptations of Satan, and absence of God from his ordinances, what a pleasure to think he is going above to worship at the *general assembly*, where Satan never enters, and where God never conceals himself; but appears universally gracious, and without a frown; where the God of glory and mercy appears unchangeably and for ever the same!

Those of us who have been long restrained from all the pleasure and profit of public ordinances, what a blessed release will it be to our souls, when we shall be dismissed from the bonds of flesh, into that great and holy society of spirits, and shall feel no more restraints for ever! We who have been detained from the house of God, by the uncharitable laws of men, or the painful providence of God, with what a divine relish shall we embrace our liberty in that day, and be eternally free from all forbidding laws, and all imprisoning providences!

O how heartily should it engage our affections to one another, and increase the pleasure of our worship, when we come to wait on God together here below, to think that we shall worship God together in the upper world! How should it unite the hearts of our congregations one to another in divine love, and make christians for ever forbear wrath and anger here, since they must be everlasting fellow-worshippers above!

What a glorious joy will it be to you who are the heads and rulers of this family, who have so often joined in sweet devotion here on earth, when you shall meet each other there, and worship together before the throne in heaven! What a mutual endearment, and mutual delight does such a prospect raise between the nearest relations! How doth it exalt the sweetest passion, heighten and refine the warmest love! What a blessed tran-

port will it be to the parents, to find their children there, engaged in the same work! And what a joyful meeting will it be to you, the children, the hopeful offspring of this house, to find each other in that company, and to see your pious parents with you! With what a glorious and unspeakable joy shall parents render up their accounts to God in this language, "*Lord, here am I, and the children that thou hast given me;*" imitating the words of the Lord Jesus, giving up his account to his Father; *Heb.* ii. 13.

How will our gladness increase, and our souls enlarge themselves in holy joy, to behold our christian friends, and our dear relatives, standing in the same assembly, as fellow-worshippers at the throne! How will the heads of this family rejoice, if their whole household should be found there, whom they have endeavoured to encourage in their way to heaven, by a religious care to maintain household worship! how will the joy of faithful ministers be advanced by every one of their hearers, whom they shall find in that blessed church above! *Ye are our crown, and our glory, and our rejoicing in that day;* 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20.

Now should not each of us maintain a holy jealousy within ourselves, and say, "Which of us shall be missing?" May not every one of us so far suspect ourselves, as to say, "*Lord, is it I?*" Shall I be wanting there, when all the rest of this little assembly shall be worshipping with the saints in heaven? Shall I be separated from them with whom I have so often appeared before God, and bowed the knee together on earth? O dreadful thought of overwhelming sorrow! Which of us all has so much stupidity, or such impious courage, as to bear the terrible apprehension? To be divided for ever from the family of God, and shut out of his upper sanctuary! O may these words make a proper impression on every heart, to keep our jealousy awake, and spur us onward in our christian course of duty and devotion! May such thoughts as these excite us to *give all diligence to make our calling and election sure,* and in every act of worship here in this world, to get some clearer evidence of an interest in the favour of God, some further meetness for glory; that when the great assembly shall join together in that heavenly worship, we may assist with our praises, and mingle our joy with theirs. *Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMON XIII. AND XIV.

APPEARANCE BEFORE GOD HERE AND HEREAFTER.

I.

WHILE I am banish'd from thy house,
I mourn in secret, Lord:
"When shall I come, and pay my vows,
"And hear thy holy word?"

II.

So while I dwell in bonds of clay,
Methinks my soul shall groan,
"When shall I wing my heavenly way,
"And stand before thy throne?"

III.

I love to see my Lord below,
His church displays his grace;
But upper worlds his glory know,
And view him face to face.

IV.

I love to worship at his feet,
Though sin attack me there;
But saints exalted near his seat,
Have no assaults to fear.

V.

I'm pleas'd to meet him in his court,
And taste his heavenly love;
But still I think his visits short,
Or I too soon remove.

VI.

He shines, and I am all delight,
He hides, and all is pain:
When will he fix me in his sight,
And ne'er depart again?

SERMON XV.

A RATIONAL DEFENCE OF THE GOSPEL: OR, COURAGE IN PROFESSING CHRISTIANITY.

ROM. i. 16.

I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST, FOR IT IS THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION TO EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH.

THE FIRST PART.

SHAME is a very discouraging passion of the mind; it sinks the spirits low, it enfeebles all the active powers, and forbids the vigorous execution of any thing whereof we are ashamed. It was necessary therefore, that St. Paul should be endued with sacred courage, and raised above the power of shame, when he was sent to preach the gospel of Christ among the Jews or the heathens, to face an infidel world, and to break through all the reproaches and terrors of it. *I am a debtor*, saith he, *verse* 14. *to the Greeks and to the barbarians;* that is, to the learned and the unlearned nations; *to the wise and to the unwise:* I have a commission from Christ to publish his gospel among all the nations of men, and I esteem myself their debtor, till I have delivered my message: And though Rome be the seat of worldly power and policy, the mistress of the nations, and sovereign of the earth, where I shall meet with opposition and contempt in abundance, yet I have courage enough to preach this doctrine at Rome also, *for I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.*

My friends, this is an age wherein the gospel of our Redeemer meets with much contempt and opposition. There are many in a baptized nation, and who have been brought up in the christian belief and worship, that begin to be weary of Christ and his religion; they are endeavouring to find blemishes and defects in this sacred gospel, and in that blessed word of God that reveals this grace to us. The divine truths, that belong to this gospel, meet with mockery and profane reproach from deists and unbelievers. I may call it, therefore, a day of rebuke and blasphemy. God grant we may never become a land of heathens again! Those of us that believe this gospel from the heart, have need of courage to maintain our profession of it, especially in some companies and conversations. We should prepare ourselves to encounter the false reasonings of unbelievers, as well as harden our faces against their ridicule. Let us therefore meditate this sacred text, that each of us may pronounce boldly the words of this great apostle, *I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.*

Now, that our meditations may proceed regularly on the present theme of discourse, let us consider,

I. What the gospel of Christ is, that we may not mistake it.

II. What is included in this expression, I am not ashamed of it.

III. What there is in this gospel that might be supposed any way to expose a man to shame; and I shall take occasion under this head to give particular an-

swers to some of the most important objections that might be made against the gospel, and shew that there is no just reason to be ashamed of it.

IV. I shall consider what is that general answer to all objections; that universal guard against sinful shame which is contained in my text, and which will bear out every christian in his faith and profession of the gospel of Christ, *viz.* that it is the power of God to the salvation of every one who believes. And,

V. I shall draw some proper inferences.

First, What is the gospel of Christ?

I answer in general, It is a revelation of the grace of God to fallen man through a Mediator. Or, it is a gracious constitution of God for the recovery of sinful and miserable man, from that deplorable state into which sin had brought him, by the mediation of Christ: Or, in the words of my text, it is the power of God, or his powerful appointment, for the salvation of every one who believes. The word gospel, in the original, εὐαγγέλιον, signifies good news, or glad tidings. And surely, when a sinner, who is exposed to the wrath of God, is sensible of his guilt and danger, it must needs be glad tidings to him to hear of a way of salvation, and an all-sufficient Saviour. This constitution of God for our salvation has had various editions, if I may so express it, or gradual discoveries of it made to mankind, ever since Adam first sinned, and God visited him with the first promise of grace before he turned him out of paradise. But the last and most complete revelation of this gospel was made by the personal ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, and more especially by his apostles, when his own death, resurrection, and exaltation, had laid the complete foundation for it. From the books of the New Testament, therefore, we may derive this larger description of the gospel of Christ.

It is a wise, a holy, and gracious constitution of God for the recovery of sinful man, by sending his own Son Jesus Christ into the flesh, to obey his laws which man had broken, to make a proper atonement for sin by his death, and thus to procure the favour of God, and eternal happiness for all that believe and repent, and receive the offered salvation; together with a promise of the Holy Spirit to work this faith and repentance in their hearts, to renew their sinful natures unto holiness, to form them on earth fit for this happiness, and to bring them to the full possession of it in heaven.

It might be proved that this is the sense and substance of the gospel of Christ, from many of the prophecies of the Old Testament, and the ceremonies and figures of the Jewish church, as well as from a variety of citations from the writings of the evangelists and apostles: Yet there have risen some persons, I mean the Socinians and their disciples, in the last age and in this also, who call themselves christians, but they also curtail and diminish the gospel of Christ, as to make it signify very little more than the dictates, and hopes of the light of nature, *viz.* "That if we repent of our sins past, and obey the commands of God as well as we can for the future, Christ as a great prophet, has made a full declaration that there is pardon for such sinners, and they shall be accepted unto eternal life:" and all this without any dependance on his death as a proper sacrifice, and with little regard to the operations of his Holy Spirit.

Now I need use no other argument to refute this mistaken notion of the gospel,

than what may be derived from the words of my text, *viz.* that St. Paul expresses it with a sort of emphasis, and as a matter of importance, that he was *not ashamed of the gospel of Christ:* Whereas if this had been all the substance of the gospel, he had no reason to be ashamed of it, either among the Jews or the heathens. The Jews had a knowledge of forgiveness upon repentance, and a belief of it long before Christ came: And the heathen philosophers would have readily received it, as a thing very little different from what their natural reason might lead them to hope for; though it could not fully assure them of it: They would never have sought to expose and ridicule the preaching of St. Paul as mere babbling, and called him *a setter forth of strange gods.*

But on the other hand, if we suppose him publishing the glorious doctrine which I have described, there was something in this so strange to the ears of the heathens, as well as of the blinded Jews, that might well be supposed to awaken their opposition and rage; and therefore it was a great point gained with him, when he had courage enough to maintain such a gospel, and to say, I am not ashamed of it.

This leads me to the second thing proposed.

Secondly, What is included in these words, I am not ashamed of the gospel? To this I answer under these five heads:

1. I am not ashamed to believe it as a man.
2. I am not ashamed to profess it as a christian.
3. I am not ashamed to preach it to others as a minister.
4. I am not ashamed to defend it, and contend for it as a good soldier of Christ.
5. I am not ashamed to suffer and die for it as a martyr.

1. I am not ashamed to believe this gospel as a man. My rational powers give me no secret reproaches. My understanding and judgment do not reprove and check my faith. I feel no inward blush upon the face of my soul, while I give the fullest assent to all these truths, to this scheme of doctrine, to this heavenly contrivance and system of grace. A rational man, especially who has been bred up in learning, should be ashamed to believe fables and follies, but I believe all this gospel, and am not ashamed. My own reason approves it, and justifies me in the persuasion and belief of such a gospel as this is. I believe it with so firm and unshaken a faith, that I venture all my own eternal concerns upon it. I lay all the stress of my hopes of a blessed immortality on it. My soul rests here, and I am not ashamed of my resting-place: I am not ashamed of my Saviour, and the method of his salvation. I am persuaded my hopes shall never disappoint me. Surely, if the gospel had been so very irrational a thing, as some men pretend it to be, St. Paul, being so rational and wise a man, would have been ashamed to believe it. But I believe it, says he, and am not ashamed. I do not think it casts any just reflection upon my rational capacities, or my learned education at the feet of Gamaliel, for me to give a full assent to this gospel.

2. I am not ashamed to profess it as a christian. I am ready to tell the world that I believe it, and I take all occasions to let the world know it. I am coming to profess this gospel at Rome, and am not ashamed: I have owned it before my own countrymen the Jews already, where it has been most reproached. I have been telling the gentiles what the gospel of salvation is, and I long to see you at Rome, that I may tell you what my belief is in the gospel, and may hear how far you have believed, and may be *comforted by the mutual faith both of you and me;* Rom. i. 12. I shall be glad to tell you

what doctrines I venture my own soul upon, and shall be willing to hear from you whether you venture your souls upon the same doctrine, or no; and shall rejoice to find we are both interested in one salvation.

3. I am not ashamed to preach it to others as a minister, that is, to invite others to believe it. It is a communicable good, and I am sent to diffuse it, nor am I ashamed of my commission. See 2 Tim. i. 12, 13. *Our Lord Jesus Christ has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel*, and has appointed me a preacher, and an apostle to the gentiles: I preach the gospel, and *am not ashamed*, though I have suffered for it. I venture my soul upon it unto the last great day, and I bid thee, Timothy, as a preacher unto others, *to hold fast the same form of sound words which thou hast learned of me.* I long to teach the whole world this faith and this doctrine, therefore, *I am a debtor to the Greeks and barbarians;* I would make others partakers of the same hope. *Would to God, that not only thou, Agrippa, but all those that hear me, were not only almost, but altogether such as I am, except only these bonds, these sufferings* which I endure for Christ's sake; *Acts* xxvi. 29.

4. I am not ashamed to contend for it as *a good soldier of Christ;* to defend it when it is attacked, and to vindicate the cause of my Lord and Master. Where it is assaulted I endeavour to secure it, though with many reproaches from the carnal prejudices of mankind. I oppose them all; for they oppose my Saviour and his cross, and I build my everlasting hopes there. *I am set for the defence of the gospel of Christ;* Phil. i. 17. and I will *contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints;* Jude, ver. 3. And he gave us an instance of it, that when Peter, who was an apostle, seemed to diminish some of the glory and the liberty of the gospel, he *withstood him to the face;* Gal. ii. 11. "There shall no man silence me, or stop my mouth, when I am preaching a crucified Saviour, and when I express my faith in the liberty and latitude of the gospel of Christ. For if I durst withstand an apostle under his criminal concealments, and in his diminution of the honour of this doctrine, surely I dare oppose all the world besides."

5. *Lastly*, I am not ashamed to suffer and die for it as a martyr. Load me with reproaches, ye Jews, my countrymen, and load me with chains, ye magistrates of Rome; of none of these am I ashamed or afraid, but with all boldness I am always ready that Christ should be magnified in my life, or my death; *Phil.* i. 14, 20. And as for my friends that are full of sorrow lest Paul should be sacrificed for the faith of Christ, What mourn ye, and break my heart for? *I am not only ready to be bound, but to die for the sake of Christ. I count nothing dear to me, no, nor my life precious to myself, that I may finish with joy the course of my ministry of this gospel, that I may testify the grace of my God;* Acts xx. 24. and xxi. 13.

I might add also, that St. Paul intends and means more than he expresses by a very usual figure of speech: I am not ashamed of it, that is, I glory in it, I make my boast of it, if there be any doctrine worth boasting of it is the gospel of Christ. If I have any profession to glory in, it is that I am a christian. Once I was a pharisee, and I counted it my gain and my honour; Phil. iii. 7, 8. *But what things were gain to me, these I counted loss for Christ; yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.* I glory in being a minister of the gospel; it is the highest honour God could have put upon me, who am less than the least of all saints. *To me is this grace given to preach among the gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;* Eph. iii. 8. I glory in it to that degree, that I am dead to all things else. *God forbid I*

should glory in any thing save in the cross of our Lord Jesus, whereby the world is crucified to me, and I to the world; Gal. vi. 14. I glory in my sufferings for Christ: and, my friends, if ye understood the value of these things, they are your glory too. *If I am offered up a sacrifice for the service of your faith; I joy and rejoice together with you all;* Phil. ii. 17. O! that you would but rejoice together with me in it!

Thus I have shewed you that all these things are implied in St. Paul's not being ashamed of the gospel of Christ, and I have proved it to you from other parts of his epistles.

The third general head I proposed to speak to, was this, What is there in this gospel that may be supposed to expose any man to shame? And this question is very needful; for if there were nothing in it that men might take occasion to throw their scandals and reproaches at, it had been no great matter for St. Paul to have cried out, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.

To this I answer in general, this was a gospel that contradicted the rooted prejudices of the Jews, and was severely reproached by those that professed great knowledge in their law; it was also a new and strange thing to the gentiles. *A crucified Christ was a stumbling-block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks;* 1 Cor. i. 23. There was something in the faith, and practice, and worship of the gospel so contrary to the course of their education in the world, so opposite to their carnal inclinations, and to the customs and fashions of their country, that a man might well be afraid and ashamed to profess it, when they lift their tongues, and their hands, and their swords against it, and the chief of them *crucified the Lord of glory,* and put the preachers of it to death.

Thus in general. But while I descend to particulars, I shall confine myself only to those occasions of shame, which the same gospel meets with in our day, that so the discourse may be more useful, to the present audience; and as I mention each objection or supposed occasion of shame, I shall endeavour to take off the force of it, and shew that it is unreasonable.

Now the things that might any ways be supposed to expose this gospel to shame, may be ranked under these two heads:

I. Those which arise from the doctrines of the gospel: And,

II. Those which arise from the professors of the gospel.

First, The occasions of shame that arise from the doctrines of the gospel, are these five that follow:

I. That there are mysteries in it which are above the powers of our reason to comprehend, and I will never believe a gospel that I cannot comprehend. This is the language of Socinians, men that have pretended so much to reason in our day.

But to relieve this occasion of shame, let us consider that mysteries are of two sorts.

First, Such as we should never have known but by divine revelation; but being once revealed, they may be fairly explained and understood. Such is the doctrine of the satisfaction of Christ, of the resurrection of the dead, of the forgiveness of sins for the sake of Christ's sufferings, and of eternal life in a future world. I say, these are all mysteries that were hid from ages, that is, they are such truths which nature or reason could not have found out of itself, but being once revealed to us of God, may be fairly explained and well understood.

Other sort of mysteries are those, which when revealed unto us, we know merely the existence, or reality and certainty of them, but cannot comprehend the mode and manner

how they are. And of this kind there are but two that I know of which are peculiar to our religion, and which are the chief objects of offence to some men. These are the mysteries of the blessed Trinity, and the mystery of the incarnation of Christ. The mystery of Three, whom the scripture describes as Persons, who have some glorious communion in one godhead; and the mystery of two natures united in one Person.

Now, though the way and manner how the three Persons, Father, Son, and Spirit, should be one God, and how two natures, human and divine, should be one Person in Christ Jesus; I say, though the way and manner how these things are, is not so easy to be explained and unfolded by us, and above our own present capacity to comprehend and fully to explain, yet I could never find these things proved impossible to be. If I must refuse to believe a thing that I know not the manner and nature of, there are many things in the world of nature, and in natural religion, that I must disbelieve. Let them explain to me in natural religion what is the eternity of God, what ideas they can have of a Being that never began to be; and then perhaps I may be able to explain to them how three Persons can have communion in one godhead, and how two natures can be one in Person. I am well assured, there are some doctrines in natural religion as difficult to be explained, and hard to be understood, and the manner of them is as mysterious, as these doctrines of revealed religion, which are also rendered more offensive to the thinking mind, by some mens' attempts to explain them in an unhappy manner.

But we may go a step lower to meet this objection, and confound it. In the world of nature there are mysteries of this kind, which are as unaccountable and as hard to be unfolded as the mysteries of grace. It is the doctrine of unions both in the Trinity and the incarnation, which renders them so mysterious. Now this doctrine of unions in natural philosophy hath been hitherto insolvable. We know that spirit and body are united to make a man: But the manner how they are united, remains still a most difficult question. We know that some bodies are hard, and some are soft; but what it is that ties or unites hard bodies so closely together, and makes them so difficult to be separated, is a riddle to the best philosophers, which they cannot solve; or what it is that renders the parts of soft bodies so easily separable. And many other things there are in nature as mysterious as this.

Besides, if it were possible for us to explain all things in nature, and to write a perfect book of natural philosophy with the most accurate skill, yet it would not follow that we must know God the Creator to perfection. The things of God are infinitely superior to the things of men. The nature of a Creator in his manner of existence is infinitely above the nature of creatures in theirs. It is fit there should be something belonging to God an infinite Spirit, that is incomprehensible, and above the power of finite spirits to comprehend, and fully search out and explain. It ought therefore to be no just ground of shame to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, that it has mysteries in it, that is to say, that it has some doctrines in it, which we could never have found out by the mere light of reason; and some truths, the full explication whereof we can never attain to, since there are many things in the world of nature, in the world of bodies and souls, and many things in natural religion, which we cannot fully explain.

II. Another occasion of reproach, which men fasten upon the gospel, is, that some of the doctrines are so singular and contrary to the common opinions and reasonings of men; such as that the ever-blessed God should want a satisfaction, in order to pardon sin with honour; that he should punish the most innocent and obedient man that ever

lived, even his own Son, for the sins of wicked and rebellious creatures; that we should be freed from hell, which we had deserved, by the sufferings of another in our stead; that one man should be justified with another's obedience; nay, that ten thousands of men should be pardoned and justified for the sake of the obedience and death of one single man; that all our own repentance is not sufficient of itself to obtain our pardon; and our holiness, be it never so great, does not procure us a title to the favour of God and heaven: that dead bodies, though mouldered in the grave for thousands of years, should be raised again to life and immortality: These are such strange doctrines, so very foreign to the common sentiments of most men, that some of the Athenians cried out, "*What does this babbler mean?*" A man should be ashamed of these things; the very heathen philosophers called it foolishness.

But now to remove this scandal, let us consider that many of these things are not so contrary to the reason of men as some think: As for the satisfaction made for our sins by the sufferings of Christ, did not almost all the heathen world suppose that God would not pardon sin without satisfaction? What else mean all their bloody sacrifices? And why did they sometimes proceed so far as to murder men, and offer them to God for their sins? I confefs indeed, that many of the philosophers and learned men amongst them, who derided the gospel of Christ, did also despise the sacrifices and religious ceremonies of their own countrymen, believing that God would be merciful to men that were penitent and pious, without any rites of atonement and sacrifice. But it is as evident also, that the people had a general notion of the necessity of some atonement for sin, and that the more valuable the sacrifice was, the sooner was their God appeased, and the benefit procured would be more extensive, howsoever the philosophers might ridicule it. It is manifest then, that many of the heathens did imagine that the death and sufferings of one person would procure pardon and immunities for a whole multitude. And upon this principle some of the ancient Romans, now and then out of nobility of spirit, devoted themselves to death, to appease the anger of the gods for their whole country. Thus it appears, that the business of satisfaction for sin, and the doctrine of expiation and atonement by the blood and death of a surety, was not so utterly unknown in the world.

I add farther, that the notion of one person's making satisfaction for the crime of another in human and political affairs, has been sometimes practised, and thought to be very intelligible; and why should it be counted so very monsterous and absurd in things divine? Do we understand what it is for one man to become a surety for another, or for a criminal to be set free from punishment by the voluntary substitution of another person in his stead? Are we not well acquainted what it is for one man to pay the debt of another, and the original person that was obliged thereby, to become free? Do we not know what it is for a whole family of children to inherit a possession for many ages, one after another, for some noble acts and services of their father? Therefore honour, and glory, and happiness, bestowed upon a multitude, for the sake of what one man has done, is not so unintelligible a thing as some men would persuade us. Why should that be esteemed impossible in the affairs of religion, which is evident and plainly practicable in the affairs of this world?

Again, they think it strange that our repentance should not be enough to obtain the pardon of past sins, and our own obedience should not procure heaven for us. But are not traitors and robbers, and all notorious criminals, punished in all governments, notwithstanding their repentances? Can their sorrow for what is past,

procure a pardon of their prince? Who then would be punished? And is man's government in punishing criminals, without a satisfaction, just and reasonable; and shall God's government be counted unreasonable? Can future obedience among men obtain forgiveness for past treason and rebellion? And why then should you think the great God is obliged to accept of it?

As for the resurrection of the dead, though it was counted a strange thing among the heathens, when it was preached to them; yet in these latter days, since the knowledge of God and his glorious attributes has been so much increased, and the reason of men has freely exercised itself upon things divine and human; the resurrection is not counted an impossible thing, nor the doctrine of it incredible. And I am verily persuaded, if men, whom God has endued with large capacities, and great skill in reasoning, would but employ those talents to write a rational account of most of the doctrines of our Lord Jesus Christ, it might be done with much glory and success.

As for those few doctrines of christianity, which may at first appear less reasonable to men, their abundant attestation from heaven demands our belief.

III. Another occasion of reproach is, that the gospel teaches mortification and self-denial in a very great degree, conflicting with our natural appetites, and fighting against our own flesh and blood: and all that it promises is an unseen heaven, a future reward, a far distant happiness in another country, which eye has not seen, nor ear heard of, nor the heart of man conceived. A mere spiritual pleasure, that is to be enjoyed by the mind, and which the body shall not taste of, till perhaps after a thousand years or more. Now, as under the former head, the doctrines of the gospel are a scandal to the men of reasoning, so under this they become a scandal and reproach to those that are literally called men of sense, who are carnalized and immersed in sensuality. They think it strange to forego the joys of sense for the hopes of enjoying a happiness in a world they do not know when or where.

But I need not stand long to answer this calumny; for even some of the refined philosophers gave sufficient rebuke to this sensual temper: The very heathens could say enough to abate this censure, and to remove this occasion of shame, though the gospel of Christ does it infinitely better.

Christianity does not abridge us of the common comforts of flesh and blood, nor lay an unreasonable restraint upon any natural appetite; but it teaches us to live like men, and not like brutes; to regulate and manage our animal nature with its desires and inclinations, so as to enjoy life in the most proper and becoming manner; to eat and drink, and taste the bounties of providence, to the honour of our Creator, and to the best interest of our souls.

But, suppose we were forbid all the indulgence of our appetites, and the delights of sense, by the gospel; surely, those who know what intellectual pleasures are, who can relish the joy that belongs to spirits, will not be much terrified with these objections, nor deride the faith of Christ, because it does not propose to them the reward of an earthly paradise. The rewards of the gospel are indeed spiritual till the resurrection, but those spiritual pleasures shall vastly overbalance all that toil, sorrow, and suffering, we have passed through on earth, and all that self-denial which we have exercised. But when the body shall be raised again, our refined delights

of all kinds shall be infinitely satisfying: We shall not say, that God has dealt our happiness to us with a niggardly hand, but that he has exceeded all his promises, when we shall come to taste the things God has prepared for us, which eye hath not seen, or ear heard of.

IV. Another prejudice against the gospel is this; some persons charge it with much of enthusiasm; and that the doctrine of the operations of the Spirit, and the expectation of his divine assistance to instruct us in truth, to mortify sin in us, and to enable us to perform holy duties, has too much of a visionary and fanciful turn of mind, and does not become men that profess reason.

But if such objectors were better acquainted with themselves, and knew the weakness of their own reason in the search after truth, and the various and plausible errors that attend their enquiries on every side; if they were better acquainted with the strength of temptation, the power of their own sinful appetites, and the weakness of their will to resist sin, and to fulfil the rules of righteousness: surely they would not think it a ridiculous thing to lift up a prayer to the great God to guide them into truth, and to assist them to walk steadily in the paths of religion and virtue. If they had but a deep and lively sense of their own insufficiency for every thing that is good, and of the many dangers and enemies that beset them, they would rather see infinite reason to bless their Creator, that has given them any promise or hope of the aids of his grace.

Nor is it at all fantastical or irrational to suppose, that the great and blessed God, who made these spirits of ours, should kindly act upon them, and influence them by secret and divine methods to their duty and their happiness; that he should send his own Spirit to help them onward in their proper business, which is to serve him here; and assist them in the pursuit of their true blessedness, which is, to enjoy him hereafter.

Methinks it is one of the glories of the gospel of Christ, that God has not only sent his Son to purchase heaven for us, but continually sends down his own Spirit to lead every humble christian in the way thither. When a poor penitent creature, distressed under a sense of the power of sin dwelling in him, who has long and often toiled and laboured to bring his heart near to God, and to suppress the irregular and exorbitant appetites of his nature, addresses himself to the throne of God, and cries earnestly for divine help, it is a glorious provision that is made in the gospel of Christ, that the Spirit of God is promised for our assistance. Nor is it at all unworthy of a person of the greatest reason and the best understanding, humbly to wait and hope for the accomplishment of this promise. Thus the charge of enthusiasm vanishes, and the gospel maintains its honour.

V. The last objection against the doctrines of the gospel of Christ, is, that they are not sufficiently attested, that there is not ground enough given to credit the divinity of them in our age. They are ready to say, "These things were done, according as ourselves profess, above sixteen hundred years ago, and we have not sufficient credentials to venture our faith upon at this day."

It would be too long here to repeat over to you half the grounds we have for faith in this gospel. That there was such a man as Jesus Christ; that he lived at such a time at Jerusalem; that he wrought wonderous works in his own country, is not at all disbelieved by those that profess any reasonable faith in human history. The

Jews themselves, who were his greatest enemies, do not deny that he wrought those miracles, which others could not work; but they pretend, that he did it by some magic art, by diabolical charms: and wrought miracles not by the power of God, but by virtue derived from spells and evil spirits. So that the miracles he wrought were not disbelieved and denied, but the heavenly spring of them is impiously perverted and turned downward, as though Christ borrowed his power from hell to transact these affairs. But the holiness and the heavenly temper of the gospel of Christ refutes this accusation. Satan was never known to demolish his own kingdom of ungodliness in such a manner as this. The gospel of Christ in every part of it has a most singular and sublime tendency to advance the name, the attributes, and the honour of God, whom Satan hates with a perfect hatred: He would never lend his assisting hand to support a scheme of religion so divine and holy.

Never was any body of doctrines and of duties so composed and calculated to promote the glory of God, or the good of man, as this gospel does: Our peace and happiness would be secured by it on earth, if all men would comply with it, and our felicity after death is the great and indefeasible proposal and design of it: Now Satan is a restless enemy to men, his fellow creatures, as well as to God, his Maker; and he would never exert the remains of his angelic power to encourage and defend such a pious and beneficent religion.

But the most amazing progress and success of the gospel is another argument that proves it to be divine, even when devils and magicians opposed it as well as princes and philosophers. That the gospel itself, without the force of arms, that a naked gospel, that seems so incredible as this did, should spread itself throughout the world in so short a space of time, that by the preaching of a few despised persons, and several of them fishermen that were utterly unlearned: That this gospel should triumph over all the powers and policies of men and hell: That it should make its way in opposition to the wisdom of philosophers, and the will of princes, and all the temptations and terrors of this world: This is another miracle, which perhaps is as divine and convincing as any of the preceding wonders, that attested this gospel, when it was first preached.

I add also the testimony of prophecy to that of miracles. The wonderous and exact accomplishment of many prophecies since our Lord Jesus Christ dwelt on earth in the days of his flesh, confirm his gospel. The prophecies that he himself gave forth from God, is another testimony of this gospel, which is uncontrolable. The destruction of Jerusalem, the time and methods of its destruction, and the terrors of it, may be read in *Matt.* xxiv. And if you read the history of Josephus, a Jew, you find so many parallels, that you must say Christ did foretel it indeed.

I might here subjoin the predictions of the apostles, particularly that of St. Paul, and St. John, concerning the rise and spirit of antichrist, wherein the church of Rome so clearly answers the language of the visions and prophecies. But the brightest and most uncontrolable witness of prophecy to the truth of the gospel, is the most exact and punctual accomplishments of all the predictions of the Old Testament, in the life and death, the resurrection and glory of Jesus Christ our Lord. From the first promise given to Adam in the garden, down to the words of Malachi, the last of the prophets, you find every thing that was said of him fulfilled in his history.

And thus the books of the Jews, wherein they placed all their hopes, confirm the gospel of Christ, and refute and confound their own infidelity: So that if ever I had been a Jew, and did believe Moses and the prophets, I think I am constrained to be a christian, and believe in Jesus Christ.

Thus I have endeavoured to answer those objections against the gospel, which are pretended to arise from the truths or doctrines of it: And before I proceed to answer those cavils which are raised against it, because of the professors of it, I must finish the present discourse with a word or two of improvement.

Use 1. If this be a gospel not to be ashamed of, then study it well: Learn the truths and doctrines of it thoroughly: Truths and doctrines, which St. Paul, so wise, and so great a man, did not blush to profess, and preach and die for. Value it as he valued it: The more you know it, the more you will esteem it; and the better you are acquainted with all the glorious articles of it, the less you will be ashamed of it: the divine harmony of the whole will cast a beauty and a lustre on every part.

Use 2. Furnish yourselves with arguments for it daily, that you may profess it without shame, and defend it without blushing: This is a day of temptation, and you know not what conversation you may be called into by divine providence; you know not what cavils you may meet with to assault your faith, and attack christianity. *Be ready therefore to give reasons of the hope that is in you*, and to make a just and pertinent reply to gainsayers, and convince those, if possible, that are led away captive by the wiles of the devil to forsake Christ and his gospel. Let not every turn of wit, or sleight of argument and sophistry, make you waver in your faith. It is a gospel that will bear the trial of reasonings and reproaches. It has something in itself that is divine, and therefore it is able to support the professors of it against an army of cavillers.

Use 3. Submit to all the institutions of it. Profess the whole of the gospel; not only the doctrines, but the ordinances of this gospel, are divine and glorious; they have something in them that shew they come from God, and they have something in them that evidently leads to God. They have all something in their sense and signification that discovers divinity. Wait upon God therefore in all his ordinances, in the assemblies of christians, that you *may see his power and his glory in his own sanctuary*, and that you may, from your own experience, be able to say, that the gospel is too great, too glorious, too divine a thing in its doctrines and worship, and in all its institutions, for you ever to be ashamed of. It has now, for sixteen ages, endured the test of the wit, and the rage of earth and hell, and it shall stand in power and glory, till the heavens be no more.

HYMN FOR SERMON XV.

A RATIONAL DEFENCE OF THE GOSPEL.

I.

SHALL atheists dare insult the cross,
Of our Redeemer God?
Shall infidels reproach his laws,
Or trample on his blood?

II.

What if he chuse mysterious ways,
To cleanse us from our faults?
May not the works of sovereign grace
Transcend our feeble thoughts!

III.

What if his gospel bids us fight
With flesh, and self, and sin?
The prize is most divinely bright,
Which we are call'd to win.

IV.

What if the foolish and the poor,
His glorious grace partake?
This but confirms his truth the more,
For so the prophets spake.

V.

Do some that own his sacred name,
Indulge their souls in sin?
Jesus should never bear the blame,
His laws are pure and clean.

VI.

Then let our faith grow firm and strong,
Our lips profess his word;
Nor blush, nor fear to walk among
The men that love the Lord.

SERMON XVI.

A RATIONAL DEFENCE OF THE GOSPEL: OR, COURAGE IN PROFESSING CHRISTIANITY.

ROM. i. 16.

I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST, FOR IT IS THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION TO EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH.

THE SECOND PART.

THERE are many in the world who call themselves christians, and boast in the name; yet if you ask them what the gospel of Christ is, they are either struck into confusion and silence, or they give such an aukward and impertinent answer, as sufficiently discovers they know little of the religion of Christ, or of the sacred name into which they were baptized. Now that we may act and speak as becomes persons endued with reason, I thought it necessary at first to give some account what this gospel is, that you might know and understand the religion which you profess; and if ye will glory in the name of christian, ye may be able to tell what it is you mean by christianity.

By reading the books of the New Testament, wherein the gospel is contained, you will find this to be the sum and substance of it, *viz.* that it is a wise, a holy, and a gracious constitution of God for the recovery of sinful man, by sending his own Son Jesus Christ into the flesh, to obey his law which man had broken, to make a proper atonement for sin by his death, and thus to procure the favour of God, and eternal happiness, for all that believe and repent, and receive this offered salvation; together with a promise of the holy Spirit to work this faith and repentance in their hearts, to renew their sinful natures unto holiness, to form them on earth fit for this happiness, and to bring them to the full possession of it in heaven.

I have shewn, in the next place, what St. Paul meant, when he told the Romans he was not ashamed of this gospel: he was neither ashamed to believe it as a man, nor to profess it as a christian, nor to preach it to others as a minister, nor to defend it as a good soldier of Christ, nor to suffer and die for it as a martyr.

The third thing which I proposed, was to make it appear, that all the occasions of shame, which men of infidelity pretend to raise from this gospel, may be answered upon the fair and just principles of reason and argument. The first sort of reproaches are those which are cast upon the doctrines of the gospel, and I hope I have rolled them away.

I repeat no more of these things, but proceed to the next sort of occasions of shame, and these are such as are supposed to arise from the professors of this gospel; and I shall endeavour to shew you also how they may be answered. They are chiefly these four:

I. Some will say, "The professors of this gospel in the beginning were the weak, and foolish, and mean things of this world; but it was despised by the wise, it was scorned by the great and honourable, and persecuted by the mighty. Why should a Paul, a pharisee, a doctor of the law, become a follower of a carpenter's Son, and associate

with a parcel of fishermen? This is a scandal, and foolish indeed. *Who among the pharisees or rulers have believed on him?*" John vii. 48. This was the stumbling-block of the gospel in that age, and it is the stumbling-block at which many persons take offence in our age too. " It is the unthinking multitude, say they, the mere mob of mankind, that are led away with the noise of strange things and the gospel. And it is only those who have no relish of good sense that can dispense with mysteries. The poorer and weaker sort of men and women flock after your powerful preachers of the gospel, but wise men despise it." I am very glad, my friends, if in your conversation you meet with no such persons that ridicule the gospel at this rate. But there are many in our age and nation arrived at this height of pride, and contempt of the gospel.

This objection may have more answers than one given to it; as *first*, it is a matter of unjust reproach, and it is false in fact; for all the professors of this gospel are not weak and unlearned. There have been in the very beginning of christianity some wise, some great persons, that have given testimony to this gospel by their believing it. St. Paul was a man of no weak reason, no mean understanding, no small learning, and yet he believes this gospel, and professes he is not ashamed of it.

And there have been in most ages of the church some instances of the power and success of this gospel in converting philosophers and senators, and princes. The learned, the ingenious, and the noble amongst mankind have sometimes given up their names to Christ, have yielded their assent to his doctrines, and conformed their hearts and lives to the rules of his gospel. Men of wit and reason have been converted to the faith, and then have exerted their peculiar talents in the defence of christianity, and they have convinced the world that they had neither left their reason nor their wit behind them when they became christians. Men of grandeur and power have sometimes also supported it with honour.

But the number of these have not been exceeding great. God has ordained that there should be some, to shew that it is no foolish and unreasonable doctrine, that it is not a religion unworthy of kings, nor unbecoming the wisest and the greatest of characters. But if there have been but a few great and wise have embraced it, it is evident that its success and glory is not owing to the wisdom and power of men, but to the divinity of its doctrines, and the power of God.

Besides, I might tell you, *secondly*, that riches, and grandeur, and elevated degrees of wit and learning, become a sore temptation to pride of mind and self-sufficiency. Now the faith of the gospel is founded in humility, and self-diffidence, and poverty of spirit; and this is one plain reason why it was received by so few of the rich, and the learned, and the mighty among men, though it was contrived and invented by God himself.

I answer, in the *third* place, that it is one of the designed characters of the true gospel of Christ, and it is foretold by the ancient prophets, that when it should come to be preached upon the earth, the poor should receive it. Its reception by the poor and weak among men, is one evidence that it comes from God; *Matt.* xi. 5. When John the Baptist sent his disciples to our Saviour to know whether he was the Messiah, or must they expect another? *Go, tell John, the blind receive sight, the deaf hear, and the lame walk, and to the poor the gospel is preached; blessed is he that is not offended in me, &c.* Go, and give John this very account I now relate to you, and tell him these are my credentials, these are the testimonials I bring. John will infer that I am the Messiah, and

this is the true gospel that I preach; for the great and rich, and the pretenders to wisdom among the Jews, account it *a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence*, and only a few of the poor receive it; as it was foretold by the prophets.

Each of us may say therefore, if only the wise, or the great, or the rich, believed it, it must have been such a gospel as I could never have believed; for it wanted one character which is necessarily adjoined to it, that is, that the poor receive the gospel: *Father, I thank thee*, says our Lord, *that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, but thou hast revealed them unto babes;* Matt. xi. 25. *It pleased God, when the world by wisdom knew not God*, to darken all their wisdom, and turn it into folly, and to call those that were esteemed fools, and make them wise in believing the gospel of Christ. It has pleased God to choose the mean, and *weak, and contemptible things of this world to confound the wise and mighty.* It has pleased him to choose the *things that are not, to bring to nought the things that are, that no flesh might glory in his presence;* 1 Cor. i. 27, &c.

II. It is another occasion of stumbling or shame in the gospel of Christ, that some of the professors of it are vicious in their lives. "Will you believe such a gospel, says an infidel, that does not restrain the professors of it from the worst of sins?"

This, I confess, gives it great dishonour among the men of the world, and is sometimes ready to shake the faith of younger christians; they know not how to go on farther in christianity, for such and such that made great profession, you see how they are fallen. This is a common temptation of the devil; it is a frequent snare, and there hath been many a pious soul that hath been in danger of being caught thereby. The vices of some professors were great even in St. Paul's days: there were some among the Philippians; *Phil.* iii. 18. *Of whom I have told you often, and now even weeping, that they walk as enemies to the cross of Christ;* "and cast scandal and shame upon it. It makes my eyes flow with tears, and my soul bleed within me to hear of it: the gospel of Christ is so much dishonoured by these means."

But if we take a nearer view, we shall see that no doctrine ought to fare the worse, because some wicked men are professors of it. It was not counted a discredit to philosophy, that some of the professors of it, who hated the gospel, were vicious in their lives. I would ask the deist now, is there any ground to disbelieve natural religion, because there are some that make profession of it are fallen into great sins? The gospel itself *teaches us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts*, and does not indulge one of them. And they are said to be enemies to the cross of Christ, when their conversation is all earthly, when their God is their belly, and their glory is their shame. This is no fault of the gospel, for they felt not the power of it. Nor is there any religion or profession in the world that would have had any followers at all by this time, if men must have entirely cashiered that religion, because there have been some persons vicious that have been professors of it. There is no sect, no religion in the world, though the institution and the rules of it have been ever so pious, but what has produced some persons that have been vicious in their lives.

But this cavil is still carried on, and urged with much vehemence. "If the gospel of Christ were a religion so heavenly, and so divine in its original, as you pretend, surely the nations that profess it would eminently exceed all other nations in piety, in justice and goodness; whereas the nations that now-a-days embrace christianity,

are not at all superior to the mahometans, nor to some of the heathens, either in duty that relates to God or man: And if we may give credit to ancient history, the virtues of the old Romans, long before the days of Julius Cæsar, shone much brighter than any of the virtues of the baptized nations: There was more truth and honesty, more devotion to the heavenly powers, more of a public spirit and zeal for their country's good, than we can find in any christian kingdoms or states now-a-days." To this I would give these three answers:

1. The account which we have of the shining virtues of these best ages of heathenism, is given us only by their own posterity, who lived in succeeding ages. Now it is the well-known temper and custom of mankind to magnify the virtue of their ancestors, and to say, that the former times are better than these: But you have scarce any heathen writers, who do not describe their own age as vicious enough, if they have occasion to talk upon that subject. And therefore there is just reason to suspect the strict truth of these encomiums of their forefathers.

2. Although some social virtues in a heathen country might really flourish more for an age or two, springing from the principles of ambition, and honour, and love to their own country; yet there were such vices also practised among many of the gentile nations, which are seldom heard or known among christians: The apostle describes them in *Rom.* i. 26. and that in such a manner, as leads us to believe that they were practised by those who professed wisdom among them.

It must be acknowledged also, that these nations were gross idolaters, and worshipped many gods, and that even in the times when their social virtues were most conspicuous. Now this is most highly criminal in the sight of the great and sovereign God, the Creator of all things: And the warmer and the more zealous were their devotions which they paid to these idols, with the neglect or contempt of the true God, the greater was their guilt and abomination.

But, 3. The chief answer I give is this, that when whole kingdoms are made christians merely by birth, education, and custom, it is not to be supposed that a twentieth part of them believe the gospel upon any just and reasonable principles of knowledge and choice. When whole cities and nations are worshippers of Christ, no otherwise than the Ephesians were worshippers of Diana, or the Turks of Mahomet, it is not reasonable to expect that there should be much difference in the virtues of such a national sort of christians, mahometans, or heathens; for the principle from which all their religion springs is the same, namely, their education, custom, and fashion of their country; and therefore their vices are much the same as they would be according to the present reigning humour, disposition, or political temper of the nation, whatsoever were their form of religion and their established worship.

The true way therefore to put these things to the test, is to consider those christians only who believe and profess the gospel from knowledge, and choice, and inward conviction, and who make their religion a matter of solemnity and importance, and not of mere form and custom. Now if you separate these from the rest of mankind, I am well assured, that as bad as the christian world is, you will find all the human and divine virtues more gloriously practised among such christians as these, than among an equal number of the professors of any other religion under the sun: For inward christianity, and the faith of the gospel, when it is built upon just foundations,

will necessarily draw along with it such a train of virtues and graces as shall *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour;* and by such a comparison as this, men would be constrained to confess that *God is among us of a truth.*

III. The various and divided opinions, the sects and parties that are found in the christian world, have been another occasion of scandal and offence to the infidels. "How can we ever come, say they, to any certainty what your religion is, since you do not agree about it among yourselves?"

"All Europe pretends to be christian, and to believe the gospel; yet France, and Spain, and Italy, and Poland, and a good part of Germany, tell us, that true christianity is found only amongst them. But in the countries of Denmark, Sweden, the northern parts of Germany, and in the British islands, there is another religion professed of a very different kind, and they call theirs the pure gospel, and reformed christianity. The protestant and the papist divide these western parts of the world, and they are ready to tear one another to pieces upon the account of their different opinions and practices. Now if the books that contain the religion of Christ be of so very uncertain sense and signification, truly we are ashamed of such a doubtful religion; it is even as well for us to content ourselves with the religion that the light of nature teaches us, and the dictates of our own common reason, which we think has more certainty in it.

To this I answer, that it is a great mistake to imagine, that the light of nature and reason, if left entirely to itself in this corrupt and fallen state, has more certainty in its determinations than scripture hath. How many wild opinions hath the corrupt mind of man produced among the inhabitants of the heathen world, and this same light of nature has not corrected them! What infinite diversity of vain and monsterous fancies hath past for religion and devotion among them! And the light of nature has been supposed to dictate some of them, for they did not always pretend revelation for them. There have been wide and irreconcileable differences among the philosophers, as well as among the priests and the people of different nations. The light of nature and reason is a poor dark bewildered thing, if it hath no commerce nor communication with persons who have been favoured with divine revelation. It is only the scripture that has established and ascertained the doctrines of natural religion: And it is to the scripture that the deists of our age are obliged for their greater acquaintance with natural religion than ever their fore-fathers, the heathen philosophers, arrived at, though they are too proud to acknowledge it. If they agree better, and are more uniform in their principles now than the old epicureans, the stoics, and the platonists were, it is all owing to a more intimate acquaintance with the writings of Moses and the prophets, the evangelists, and the apostles; so that it is with a very ill grace that our present infidels can object to christians their difference of opinions, and pretend that this is a ground of shame to the gospel of Christ, and a reason why they do not believe or profess it.

But I come now to give some account of the true reasons of such divisions of sect and party among christians. There are two great causes of these divisions, and the charge is not to be laid upon the gospel of Christ, nor upon the books that contain it.

1. The first cause is, that the papist does not pretend to derive his religion merely from the Bible; but he brings in the Jewish apocryphal writers of ancient ages, and lays them also for a foundation of his faith; and he makes the traditions of the christian

church, which he pretends to have been delivered down from age to age, of almost the same authority as the scripture itself: And some of their authors have raised these traditions to equal dignity with the scripture, as being built upon the same foundation, *viz.* the authority of the church. As they have many things in their religion which they cannot find in the word of God; so they think it is sufficient if they can support them by these pretended traditions of the church. Whereas the protestant takes nothing for the ground of his faith but the books of the Old and New Testament; and what he cannot find written there, nor derived thence by most obvious and evident consequences, he does not profess it as any necessary part of his christianity. The religion of the protestant therefore is abundantly more conformable to the gospel of Christ, both in the doctrines and the worship of it, because it derives the whole from the word of God: But it is no wonder at all that there should be such a difference between them and the papists, when they lay such different foundation for their faith and practice.

2. Another reason why the protestant and papist differ so much is, because the papist pretends that there is an infallible judge among them to determine all controversies, and that their popes, and their councils, which they call the church, have authority to appoint what shall be esteemed the true articles of faith, and to bring in rites and ceremonies into their worship according to their own invention and pleasure. And that all the people are bound to believe as the church bids them believe, and to practise in matters of worship whatsoever the church bids them practise: And upon this account they forbid the scripture to be read by the common people, that they may not learn the truth of the gospel, but may take all for gospel which they teach them, and be content with it. Whereas the protestant has nothing else but his Bible to have recourse to for the conclusion of all controversies; and he encourages every man to use his Bible, and to judge for himself concerning the sense and meaning of it, using the best helps that he can obtain for this end: The protestant ministers teach him not only what they know of the gospel, but they put the Bible into his hand, and bid him search and see whether things are so or no, that thence he may learn what are those doctrines and those duties which Christ has required him to believe and practise. Thence it comes to pass, that there are almost a thousand things in popery, which the protestants utterly disown, because they disown the power of the pope, or church, to stamp new articles of faith, or invent new forms of worship.

Objection. But it may be said still, there are so many different sects and parties among the protestants themselves, as encourages the deist to maintain his charge and accusation. "Why do you, saith he, who profess to derive all your religion from the scripture, differ so much among yourselves, both in doctrine, in worship, and in the order of your churches, if the *gospel of Christ* be so excellent a religion, and if the books that contain it can give you so plain and certain a knowledge of it?"

I answer, That almost all those things wherein protestants differ, are but of smaller importance in religion, in comparison of those many and great things wherein they agree. The chief and most important points of christianity are written with so much plainness and evidence in the word of God, as would lead all humble, honest, sincere and diligent enquirers into a belief of them, and consent in them. Now it is not necessary that the lesser matters of christianity should be written down so expressly in scripture: For the all-wise God thought it proper to leave many of these articles of less importance more dubious and obscure, both to awaken the diligence of men to study his word, and to

leave amongst them some occasions for the exercise of their mutual charity and forbearance. Our blessed Lord has thought it proper to put the universal love which he requires amongst his followers, to this test or trial, to see whether they will cultivate peace and charity to one another amidst their various and divided opinions in things of less concernment.

I confess there are some differences among protestants in the great doctrines of the Trinity, and the satisfaction of Christ, which must be acknowledged to be articles of very high moment and importance in christianity. But if we compare those few who profess dangerous opinions in these points with the millions that agree in the same general profession of faith, it will be found that their number is but very small. If we consider the great ignorance of God, which is found in all men by nature, and take a survey of the unhappy influences that education, fancy, passion, pride, friendship, aversion, precipitance and laziness, have upon mankind in forming their judgments and opinions, we shall not wonder to find some persons here and there falling into strange sentiments, contrary to the plain and sufficient evidence of scripture. We believe in general, that whoever puts off all prejudices, and is piously sincere in his search of the word of God, shall certainly find, through divine assistance, all needful truth. If therefore a disbeliever come with a serious, humble, and pious mind, and apply himself with diligence and fervent prayer to read the scripture; I am well assured he will become a christian, and find out so much of the doctrines and duties of the gospel, as are necessary to his eternal happiness.

But there will be heresies arising sometimes in the church. Tares will grow up sometimes in the field that is ever so well cultivated and sown with corn: And what unknown reasons there may be in the counsels and providence of God in permitting heresies to arise for the farther trial of his own people, is too high and hard a point for us to determine. The apostle saith; 1 Cor. xi. 19. *There must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest.* If such a thing as this is, shall be abused by men of corrupt minds, to turn them quite away from the gospel of Christ, and to support their own infidelity, they must answer for it at the great day to Christ their Judge.

Thus I have done with the third charge or accusation brought against the gospel, and removed the scandal and shame that some men have thrown upon it, because there are such sects, and parties, and divided opinions among the professors of it.

IV. Another occasion of scandal which infidels charge upon the gospel of Christ, is this, "That some who have long professed it have forsaken it; and one should be ashamed to embrace such a faith as this is, for it has been tried, and found to be vain and groundless, even by those who have known it long, and searched it through and through, and therefore at last they have abandoned and cast it off."

But in answer to this, give me leave to say, first, that the chief and most common reason why persons who have professed christianity cast it off, is not because they found any just reason of blame either in its principles or rules; but because they think it too strict for them, and it curbs their vicious appetites more than they like.

I will allow, that perhaps there may be some persons who have abandoned the christian religion from a wantonness of fancy, from a licentiousness of thought, from a pride of reasoning, and who make it their glory to have thrown off the bonds of their education, and to have obtained the honour of free-thinkers, or from a presuming conceit that they

must comprehend every thing in their religion, and will believe nothing that hath mysteries in it. Such vain principles as these may have influenced some minds, and given them up to apostacy: But, I fear, far the greatest part of those who forsake the gospel, have been tempted to it by the power of their lusts, which the gospel would restrain; and some of these persons upon their death-beds have confessed it too.

This is also sufficiently visible in the world, that when men have long professed this gospel, and forsaken it, they seldom grow more pious, more sober, more honest or good than before: but, on the contrary, they generally have indulged vicious excesses, and neglected all piety, and this is rather a ground of glory to the gospel than a just reason of shame.

If these persons had generally grown more holy, if they had feared God more afterwards than ever they did before, if they had more aimed at the glory of God, and loved him better, when they forsook Christ and his gospel, then we might have some reason to suspect this gospel was false, and a mere mistake or imposture. But when these persons grow more unjust than before, love their neighbour less, are become more sensual, more selfish, disregard God more than they did before; I repeat it again, this is rather a ground of glory to the gospel of Christ, than of shame. Demas *hath forsaken us*, saith Paul, because he *loved this present world;* 2 Tim. iv. 10. A covetous Demas is no good argument why St. Paul should forsake Christ, or be ashamed of the gospel. And the apostle has shewn that those who have *made shipwreck of their faith*, have parted with *a good conscience* too, and lost their virtue; 1 *Tim.* i. 19, 20.

But there is another answer which the apostle John gives to this objection in his first epistle, chap. ii. ver. 19. *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.* They might make a profession of the gospel, and perhaps give a real assent to the truths and doctrines of it by the convincing influence of miracles and human reason, or perhaps they became christians merely by the force of education, because they were taught this religion from their childhood, and professed it without thought; but they never had such a powerful belief of this gospel of Christ, as to change their hearts, to renew their natures, to form their souls after the image of Christ into real holiness; and therefore like the hearers that are compared to stony ground, the seed did not sink deep into their hearts, though they might *receive the word at first with joy, but having not root in themselves, they endure but for a while, and when any temptation arises, they are offended*, and depart from the faith which they once professed; *Matt.* xiii. 20, 21. Thus it appears, that the gospel of Christ is never the worse in itself, nor does it deserve the less esteem in the world, notwithstanding such apostates as these, no more than seed-corn should be pronounced naught, because it does not bring forth a harvest in every soil.

I have now finished the third general head of discourse which I proposed, and have shewn, whatsoever occasions of shame might be supposed to arise either from the doctrines of the gospel, or the professors of it, are unjustly charged as blemishes on the gospel; and I have given particular answers to both sorts of cavils, and defeated the accusations.

One word of advice to christians shall conclude the present discourse; and that is this:

Since the gospel of Christ gives no just occasions of shame, you that are professors of it should take heed that you do nothing to cast shame on this gospel. Do not mingle

the christian faith with doubtful notions of your own. Do not defile your christian conversation with sinful practices. Do not make the lesser circumstances and appendages of your religion the matter of loud contest, and a party strife; for all these things expose the gospel to shame, and may justly put its professors to the blush, in the face of the world, when they are guilty of these practices.

Let me insist a little upon each of these.

1. Do not mingle the christian faith with doubtful notions and fancies of your own. The articles of our christianity, and the necessary truths of the gospel, are divine and glorious: take heed you do not bring in your peculiar sentiments and favourite opinions, which have no sufficient evidence from the word of God, and join them in the same dignity with the articles of your faith; and much less should you dare to impose them upon the consciences of your fellow-christians. The gospel itself will suffer by it, and sink in the esteem of the world, when the divine doctrines of it are mingled with our weaknesses, and debased by the addition of our doubtful sentiments.

2. Defile not your christian conversation with sinful practices. Indulge not a conformity to this present evil world in any of the corrupt and unlawful customs and courses of it. Mingle not your practice of the lovely duties which this gospel enjoins, with lying, and slandering, and railing; do not interline your lives with religion and sin, with devotion and shameful lusts. It is a gospel that forbids all iniquity, it requires that you mortify sin and *cleanse yourselves from every defilement of flesh and spirit*, and that you go on to *perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord;* 2 Cor. vii. 1. The very design and end of it in God's eternal counsels and contrivance, is, *that you might be holy, and without blame before him in love;* Eph. i. 4. If you pursue this advice, then shall others, who behold you, confess that there is something divine in christianity, when you thus adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour. Thus you give the gospel its due honour, by believing all it reveals, by worshipping according to the methods of its appointment, and by that purity of conversation which it enjoins.

3. Make not the lesser circumstances and appendages of your religion the matter of loud contest, and a party strife. We are called to *contend earnestly for the* great and necessary doctrines of *faith*, which were once delivered to the saints: but we are commanded also to receive those that are weak in the faith, without involving them *in doubtful disputations* about matters of less moment. Give no occasion to the infidel to blaspheme the gospel by your factions and quarrels, and the rage of a bitter and unsanctified zeal. Oh that the time were come, when *the wolf and the lamb shall lie down together, and there shall be nothing to hurt or destroy in all the holy mountain!* But surely, it is very hard if the lambs themselves, who belong to the flock of Christ, cannot live without hurting and destroying one another; that christians cannot live without exposing their divine and heavenly religion to the blasphemies of sinful men. Happy were the christian world, if we could all behave ourselves so as never to give occasion to the adversary to reproach the professors of the christian faith, nor throw shame and dishonour upon the gospel of Christ! May the blessed Spirit of God teach us this lesson effectually, and let it be copied out in our lives daily, till we arrive at the regions of perfect holiness and love! *Amen.*

SERMON XVII.

A RATIONAL DEFENCE OF THE GOSPEL: OR, COURAGE IN PROFESSING CHRISTIANITY.

ROM. i. 16.

I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST, FOR IT IS THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION TO EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH.

THE THIRD PART.

THOUGH the passion of shame has something in it that sinks our nature, and enfeebles our spirits, yet it is a very becoming passion, where sin is the object of it; and indeed it was wisely ordained by our Creator to be a guardian to those small remains of natural virtue that abide in us since the fall. We find the first young sinners clothed with shame in the garden of Eden at the presence of God. But the growing corruption of our natures, the subtilty of Satan, and the temptations of this world have joined together to take this piece of artillery out of the hands of virtue, and make use of it in their attacks upon religion and goodness. We ought to be ashamed indeed of nothing but our sin, our folly, and our wretchedness; but we have been too ready to be ashamed, even of the grace of God, and the methods of our recovery from folly, wretchedness, and sin. The gospel itself, *the glorious gospel*, has been made a matter of reproach among men, and its professors have been sometimes tempted to be ashamed of it.

The blessed apostle in my text had gained a victory over this temptation, for he was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Whatsoever there might be contained in the doctrines of this gospel, or whatsoever might be found among the professors of it, from which infidels or unbelievers might take occasion to throw shame and scandal upon it; yet I have shewn in the two foregoing discourses, that all this is unjustly charged on the gospel, and have given particular answers to both sorts of cavils.

I go on now to the last proposal, which is to explain the force of the apostle's argument against shame in professing and preaching this gospel, and to make it appear, that the words of my text contain a general and most extensive guard, or defence, against all possible occasions of shame in the profession of christianity; and that is, that *the gospel of Christ is the power of God for the salvation of all that believe.*

Now this is an argument which you, who believe in Christ, may all assume to yourselves as well as the apostle: You cannot preach this gospel so well as he, nor explain the reasons of your faith to others, and establish it upon so solid and unshaken foundations of argument, as Paul could do; but every christian, that has embraced the faith, and felt the power of this gospel for his own salvation, may give this reason for the profession of it, and may support his courage in opposition to all the sharpest temptations of mockery and reproach.

When the apostle says, it is the power of God, we must suppose him to understand, it is a most powerful means, or effectual instrument that God uses, to save souls, and it is attended with divine power for that end.

It is more powerful than the light of nature; for we have no just reason to believe, that the mere light of nature, without some helps of divine revelation, or some unwritten traditions of it, ever saved any souls at all; and if there have been any of the sinners of the heathen nations made partakers of grace, I think it is otherwise to be accounted for than merely by the poor remains of the light of nature.

It is more powerful than any religion that men or angels could invent, and more powerful too, than any religion that God himself ever invented, or revealed, and proposed to men before the gospel of Christ. His revelations to the patriarchs were but few; they were made here and there to a house or two, or to a family; they were particular favours that he bestowed upon persons called out of idolatry, nor had they a very long, nor spreading, nor lasting influence, except in the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, where they were frequently renewed.

It is more powerful than all the revelations of grace, which God made by Moses to the children of Israel, and intermingled with the Jewish law: for these discoveries reached but to one single nation, and wrought but feebly toward the conversion of sinful souls to God and holiness, in comparison of what the gospel of Christ has done.

Besides, let it be considered, that all the power which all the former discoveries of grace to the patriarchs, or to the Jews, had to save souls, was derived from the gospel of Christ, which is contained in them in lower measures, and in a more obscure manner. Therefore, since the gospel of Christ now stands forth in open light, and in full glory, it is most eminently powerful to convert sinners, to bring this apostate world back again to God, and to save millions of souls.

I. It is the most powerful means of salvation, considered in itself, and in its own nature and influence.

II. It is the most powerful means, as it is accompanied with the influences of the Holy Spirit.

The first of these may be called a moral persuasive influence; the last is supernatural and sovereign. Let us meditate on each of these distinctly.

I. It is the most powerful means, if we consider the gospel in itself, and its own nature. Not that the mere word of the gospel, reaching the ears of men, is sufficient to change the heart, and to save the soul without divine influences: For it is said to be the power of God to salvation; that is, it is that doctrine whereby God exerts his divine power to save sinful man. But still it must be granted, that the doctrine itself in its own nature has a very great and evident tendency to this glorious end, as it is the noblest, the richest, and the brightest discovery of grace that ever was made to man.

If we consider it in its own nature, it has the greatest moral power, or persuasive influence toward the salvation of perishing sinners. This is easily proved by explaining what this salvation means.

Salvation includes in it a freedom from the guilt and punishment of sin, together with a right and title to heaven; it implies also a freedom from the power of sin, and thereby a preparation for heaven, and a final possession of it. Under each of these considerations it will appear with great evidence, that *the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is the power of God to salvation.*

1. It is the most powerful means to set sinners free from the guilt and punishment of sin, and to relieve a distressed conscience under the sense of divine anger: It gives the most effectual security to a believer against the terrors of hell and eternal death; for it not only declares that there is forgiveness with God, but it shews us the foundation upon which this forgiveness stands, namely, the satisfaction made to the offended justice of God by the death and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, his Son. Suppose it were possible for a philosopher, or wise man, to prove that God would forgive the sins of the penitent, yet there is nothing but the gospel that can set the conscience at such joyful ease from the terror of guilt, and release the soul from the chains wherewith it was held: "For now, says the believer, I not only hear it proved by divine testimony, that there is pardon of sin to be obtained from God, but I see how God may do it with honour: I behold the atonement that is made by Christ Jesus, his own Son. The atonement is equal to the offence: He can justify me, though I am a sinner, upon the account of this perfect righteousness, and he can do it with glory to all his terrible perfections; therefore I may venture my assent to this doctrine, and I may rest my soul upon it."

2. The gospel is a powerful means also to raise undeserving sinners to a hope of heaven and eternal life. It shews us what heaven is, by the discoveries of one that has been there, even the Son of God himself. *Life and immortality are brought to light by this gospel*, which lay hid under much darkness before; 2 *Tim.* i. 10. It teaches us also how the happiness of heaven is procured for us, even by the obedience and blood of the Son of God; and therefore, some think, heaven is called *the purchased possession* in Eph. i. 14. It assures us, that this blessed state of the enjoyment of God in unchangeable peace, and in the company of blessed spirits, waits for every believer, when he is dislodged from this flesh, and when the habitation of the body is no longer fit to retain the spirit: And it reveals also the final heaven of the saints, when the body shall be raised into immortality. "Without this gospel, says the soul, I could have no just ground to hope for heaven; for all my best righteousnesses are imperfect, my fairest acts of holiness have many defects in them; but I behold the perfect righteousness of my Saviour that has procured it. A life of holiness without defect, and a most submissive obedience to a painful and shameful death, has been the price and purchase of it."

3. This gospel is a most powerful means to subdue sin in the soul, to mortify corrupt nature, to inspire us with virtue, to wean our hearts from vice, sensuality, and trifles, and from all the insufficient pretences to blessedness that the world can flatter us with. The gospel of Christ, both in his own personal ministry of it, and in the writings of his apostles, sets before us the most divine scheme of morality, piety and virtue, that ever the world knew. The sacred dictates of probity and goodness toward men, as well as the venerable rules of piety toward God, which are scattered up and down in an imperfect and obscure manner among the philosophers, and shine like a star here and there in the midnight darkness of heathenism; these are all collected and refined in the gospel of Christ, and fill the christian world with a pure and universal light like the sun unclouded in a meridian sky: We know our duty infinitely better from the instructions of Christ and St. Paul, than all the Platos, and the Plutarchs, all the Zenos and the Antonines of Greece and Rome, could ever teach us.

The most divine rules of the gospel are attended also with the noblest motives to love virtue, and to hate all vice; for never was the evil of sin so displayed to the eyes and

senses of men, as by the cross and gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Never did sin appear so hateful, so abominable, so justly the object of divine and human hatred, as when it appeared pressing the soul of the holy One of God into agonies and sharp anguish. A believer, who has seen the evil of sin, as revealed in this gospel, will hate it, and will be led powerfully to a conquest over it.

Besides, the terrors of hell are revealed to us among the doctrines of christianity, as the just punishment of sin, and that in such a manner as no other religion pretends to: For as the doors of heaven are opened by our Lord Jesus Christ, both by his ministry on earth, and by his ascent into heaven, and by the farther discoveries which his apostles have made of the future unseen happy world, so the doors of hell are opened too. Our Lord Jesus himself preached hell and terror to sinners with a sacred vehemence, and set everlasting fire in a clearer and more dreadful light than ever had been done by all the philosophers in the world. The soul of every saint has been in some measure a witness of this truth, when it lay under the work of divine conviction.

And not only the horrid nature and evil of sin, and the dreadful consequences of it, are powerful motives to make us stand afar off, and fear it; but "The sweet and constraining influence of the love of Christ does most effectually incline me, saith the believer, to hate every sin, and to follow after universal holiness: Shall I build up again the things which my Saviour died to destroy? This would be to make him suffer agonies in vain, and run counter to all the designs of his bleeding love, and the voluntary sacrifice of his soul!"

"I have also the glorious and perfect example of my blessed Lord: Never did virtue and religion shine so bright, and look so amiable as in his life, and he has set it before me as my pattern: I feel the attractive and divine power of it: Where my Lord leads, I must follow; for I would fain be like him." "He draws me by his example, and he draws me too by his heavenly promises. He spreads the glories and the joys of heaven before me, to allure my hope; I see those sacred glories, I long after the possession of these unfading joys, and I must and will keep the path that leads to paradise, that where my Lord is, I may be also." "The rules and precepts of holiness, which my Lord has taught me, are more pure, more clean, more perfect, more divine and godlike, than ever any other scheme of rules and duties was; and the joyful and dreadful motives given me to press after this holiness, are infinitely beyond all the motives that any doctrine or religion has proposed. Blessed be God that I ever learnt those holy rules, that I ever felt the power of these divine motives, and am become a lover of holiness."

4. Thus the gospel prepares the saint for heaven, and fits every power of his soul for the business and blessedness of those happy regions. "Once, says he, I had no delight in spiritual things; I had no relish of spiritual pleasures; but now I taste them with delight, and I rejoice in the hopes of a sweeter and more complete taste of them on high. Once I had no love to God: it is true, I feared him as some unknown and extraordinary terror; but I had no delight in him, no desire after him. Now he is the object of my warmest love, and of my sweetest meditations. Heaven itself, as it is described in the word of God, was not pleasant to me. What! The everlasting continuance of a sabbath? Perpetual employments of worship and service to be done for God everlastingly? These are things that were not agreeable to carnal nature; but by the influence of this

gospel of Christ my heart is new-moulded, and I delight in the fore-thoughts of such a heaven as the gospel describes." Such instances as these of the sweet efficacy of the gospel upon the soul of man, turning it into a divine temper, and fitting it for the enjoyment of God, are so many proofs of the power of this gospel unto salvation, and so many grounds and reasons why the believer cannot be ashamed of it.

But I must add, in the fifth place, it is the gospel of Christ that brings believers to the final possession of heaven. Then, and not till then, is the salvation perfect. It is the gospel that has given us an unchangeable promise of heaven, when our state of trial is ended here on earth, and Christ is bound to fulfil it. The gospel assures us, that when we are absent from the body, we shall be present with the Lord. When we see the heavens open at the death of Stephen the first martyr, and Jesus Christ standing there to receive his departing spirit; we believe that the same Jesus will fulfil the same kind office to us also, and receive our spirits, if we have been found faithful to the death.

The same gospel also gives us a more distant hope and glorious assurance of the resurrection of our bodies from the prison of the grave. When we behold the body of our blessed Saviour rising from the tomb, and ascending to glory, and when we are told, that his resurrection is a pledge and pattern of ours; then with a joyful expectation we wait for the same blessedness. The gospel lays an obligation upon Christ himself to raise his saints from the dead; for he himself tells us, that it is the will of his Father, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, should have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day; *John* vi. 40.

Hence it comes to pass, that the believer triumphs over death under the influence of these hopes. "Now, saith the saint, I can venture to die; for my spirit shall be received to dwell with my Saviour among the spirits of the just that are made perfect. These feeble and withering limbs of mine I can cheerfully commit them to dust and the grave; for the great trumpet must sound, the dead must arise, my Redeemer will call my flesh from its dark prison; I shall arise to meet the Lord in the air, and dwell with him for ever in unknown worlds of blessedness. Thus I have shewn you the first thing I proposed, *viz.* how the gospel in its own nature has a very proper and powerful tendency in a moral or persuasive way towards the salvation of the soul, as it insures pardoning grace and final blessedness to believers.

II. I come now to shew how the gospel is made powerful to the salvation of sinners by the accompanying influence of the Spirit of God, and this is supernatural and sovereign. If I should run over all the particulars I have just before mentioned, I might make it appear in each of them, how the Spirit of God by the word of his gospel works this salvation.

It is this blessed Spirit that awakens the stupid and thoughtless sinner to a sense of his guilt and danger. It is he shews him the evil of sin, and makes him groan after deliverance, and cry out, What shall I do to be saved? And it is the Spirit that reveals and discovers Christ Jesus to him as the only and all-sufficient Saviour: It is he who shews the convinced sinner, that there is righteousness and grace to be found in Christ, to answer all his present complaints and necessities. The word of the gospel says these things indeed, but it is like a *dead letter*, till the living Spirit speaks them over again, and, as it were, constrains us to hear the voice of encouragement and hope. It is he represents the death and sufferings of the Son of God, as an effectual atonement

for sin, and makes the soul believe it, and teaches us how to lay hold on this hope, to fly to this refuge, to receive this atonement: It is the Spirit of God that softens the hardest heart, and melts it into godly sorrow: It is he makes us willing to accept of Jesus as a Prince and a Saviour, to renew our sinful natures, to refine our hearts, and thereby to reform our lives: It is he that takes the blood of Christ, and applies it to a distressed conscience under the guilt of sin, and thus gives the disquieted soul rest and peace: *He takes of the things of Christ, and shews them unto us* in all their glory and sufficiency for our salvation, and thereby justly obtains the name of the Paraclete, that is, an *advocate* for Christ, and a *comforter* to us; *John* xiv. 26. and xv. 26. and xvi. 14, 15. He composes the ruffles of the disturbed mind, and speaks all the waves of the soul into a calm: He makes all within us peaceful and easy, under the apprehensions of divine forgiveness through the merit of Christ.

It is only the Spirit of God that can make the discoveries of heaven in the gospel effectual to awaken our hope, and to raise our joy: He shews us how it is purchased by the blood of Christ, and that it is made sure to all those that believe: He stamps his own holy image upon us, and seals us up for the inheritance of heaven. Eph. i. 13. *When ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation,* and *believed it, ye were* then *sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance.* The Spirit is sent into our hearts as a *spirit of adoption, whereby we call God Father;* Gal. iv. 6. And he changes us from children of wrath into the sons and daughters of the living God; and he himself dwelling in us is a pledge and *earnest of that inheritance, which is reserved for us among the saints in light.*

It is the same blessed Spirit that makes the gospel of Christ powerful to mortify sin in us; for though the words of the gospel forbid all iniquity, and require us to renounce the lusts of the flesh, and the vanities of the world, if we belong to Christ; yet it is by the Spirit of God alone that we are enabled to *mortify the deeds of the body,* that we may obtain eternal life: It is he that makes the commands of Christ come with divine power and authority upon the soul, and gives the motives of the gospel power to persuade us: It is he that renews our affections, makes us hate sin, and love God supremely, and causes us to delight in the spiritual pleasures of a future, unseen world, which before we treated with contempt, or disregard: It is by the *sanctification of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth,* that we are prepared for the heavenly *glory whereunto we are called by the gospel;* 2 Thess. ii. 13. And since the Spirit of God is promised to *dwell in us for ever;* John xiv. 16, 17. we have good reason to believe he will be our eternal Sanctifier in heaven, and our eternal Comforter.

There is such a thing as the influence of the Spirit of God attending the gospel of Christ. The apostle argues thus with the Galatian christians, *Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?* Gal. iii. 2. And it is the great promise of the gospel, or the new covenant, that God would *send his Spirit* to make it powerful for the blessed ends for which he has designed it; *Ezek.* xxxvi. 25, 26, 27. *Joel* ii. 28. *Zech.* xii. 10. *Isaiah* xliv. 3.

In the primitive days of christianity, and the age of miracles, the Holy Spirit attended the preaching of the gospel with his extraordinary *gifts of tongues, of healing, of prophecy,* as well as with the graces of conviction, and sanctification, and comfort: And the suddenness and the glory of the change that was wrought on sinners, carried with it an illustrious and incontested proof of the presence and power of God and his Spirit. Nor

have some fainter resemblances of such glorious grace been altogether wanting in later ages. There have been some most remarkable instances of great sinners converted at once by the *gospel of Christ, and the demonstrations of the Spirit.*

But in his more usual and ordinary communications of grace, he works so gently upon our natures, and in so sweet and connatural a way, as not to distinguish his agency in a sensible manner from the motions of our own souls; for he never disturbs our rational powers, nor puts any violence upon the natural faculties; yet when we are changed, when we are renewed, when sin is mortified, the scripture tells us, that it is the Spirit of God has done it: When our souls are prepared for heaven, and our corrupt natures sanctified, and suited to the things that are prepared in heaven for us, we are assured by the word of God, that the Holy Spirit has been the great operator, and has wrought this change in us. Thus I have made it appear at large, how *the gospel of Christ is the power of God to salvation.* I apply myself immediately to raise a few inferences from the subject I have been treating of.

Inference. I. How unreasonable are all the reproaches that are cast upon this gospel! A gospel that saves mankind from misery, and from sin, and eternal death! A gospel that teaches men how to appear before a holy and terrible God with comfort, though their sins are many, and their righteousnesses are imperfect! A gospel that gives the hope of pardon to criminals and rebels, and the hope of heaven to undeserving creatures! And all this upon such solid grounds and foundations as justifies its highest promises and proposals to the reason of men! It is a gospel that changes our sinful natures into holiness, and reforms our hearts as well as lives! A gospel that, aided by divine power, creates souls anew, and raises dead sinners to life! It is a gospel that turns wolves into lambs, and makes ravenous vultures as meek as doves! A gospel that so disturbs the kingdom of Satan, as to take thousands of slaves and captives out of his dominions, to transfer them into the glorious kingdom of Christ, and make them cheerful and willing subjects! A gospel that fulfils gloriously the first promise, and makes it appear, that the seed of the woman hath broke the serpent's head, and destroyed the works of the devil. You have never seen, you have never known, you have never learned this gospel aright, if you have not felt it to be the power of God unto salvation. Those that can speak evil of this gospel, it may be universally said concerning them, *they speak evil of the things they know not;* for if they had known this gospel as they ought to know it, they would have seen it all over glorious and divine; they would have felt it to be attended with divine power to their salvation, and then they would never speak evil of it.

The heathen world may be ashamed of their doctrines and their religion; the heathen worshippers may be ashamed of their sacrifices, their superstitions, and their forms of devotion; for they have no power to save their souls: And many of them were indeed brutish and shameful. Mahomet, the founder of the Turkish religion, may be ashamed of his alcoran, a volume of fables and incredible lies; all his followers may be ashamed of their prophet, and of the sensual paradise that he promises them. The Jews, under the eye of Christ, and the sun-beams of the gospel, may be ashamed of the vain tradition of their rabbins which were never divine: and even of their old rites and ceremonies which Moses gave them; for all these are now but *weak and beggarly elements;* the Spirit of God calls them so; *Gal.* iv. 9. They have now no power to save souls, since God hath abolished them; nor indeed had they ever any power but what they borrowed from this gospel of Christ, which lay concealed in them: But let none of us that believe and pro-

fess the gospel of Christ, be ever ashamed of any of the doctrines, or precepts, or promises of it; for they are all holy, they are all heavenly; all of them have divine power accompanying them to lead souls to salvation.

II. Learn hence the true method of obtaining christian courage; courage to profess the gospel of Christ against all opposition: It is by getting it wrought into your hearts and lives by christian experience, and not by learning a mere form of words in a road of education and catechism. You must feel it as *the power of God to your salvation*, or you will never suffer much for it. Let it be an *ingrafted word able to save your souls;* James i. 21. and then it will harden your faces against all blaspheming adversaries, and the terrors of a persecuting world: then you will be able to render a most powerful reason why you are bold to profess this gospel, and to *answer every one that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you;* you will be able to oppose those that set themselves against the gospel of Christ, when you feel this divine spring of courage within you.

I have encouraged you before, to acquaint yourselves with reasons and arguments that may defend your religion, and support your faith: But hours of temptation may come, when all the knowledge and learned furniture of your head, all the arguments that are treasured up in your memory, and all the reasonings that your invention can supply you with, will hardly be able to keep your faith and hope firm and stedfast; for Satan goes before you in skill and rational argument; and though your arguments are strong and solid, yet he may baffle you by his hellish sophistry, and thus cheat you of your faith, and your hope, and your heaven, if you have not got this gospel wrought into your hearts with power, if you have not felt it to be *the power of God unto salvation.*

Hence it comes to pass, that in times of great temptation and persecution there are many fall away, as the leaves of a tree in the blasts of autumn, when but here and there one stands and endures the shock: It is because there are so few of the professors of the gospel have felt it to be the power of God to the conversion of their souls, and turning their hearts to God and heaven. And hence it comes to pass also, that several unlearned christians in all ages, that could not argue much for the faith in a rational way, yet could dare to die for it, because they had this argument wrought in their own souls; they had felt a divine power going along with it to change their natures, to make them new creatures, to give them the hope of heaven, and a preparation for it.

III. From what you have heard of this subject, learn the wide extent of this argument for the defence of the gospel of Christ, and the invaluable worth of it to every christian, *viz.* that the gospel is the power of God to your salvation.

It is an argument of wide extent: for it belongs to every christian, to the wise and to the unwise, to the weak and the strong; there is no sincere christian, no true believer in Christ, but hath got the foundation of this argument wrought within him: He knows this gospel is divine, and he should not be ashamed to believe and profess it; for he hath felt it support his soul under a sense of guilt, and give him solid hope of pardoning grace: He hath found it change his sinful nature, soften his heart into repentance, and turn him from a sinner into a saint; it hath laid the foundation of eternal life within him. And as it is an argument that belongs to every true christian; so it answers every objection that an infidel can bring against the gospel, either from the doctrines, or from the professors of it: And methinks, I would fain have you all furnished with this glorious argument, and learn to manage it for the defence of your faith.

Do they tell you, that the doctrines of the gospel contain mysteries in them, and things

that are unsearchable? Do they endeavour to put you out of countenance by ridiculing the truth of christianity, as being contrary to the common opinions and reasonings of men? Do they reproach them as foolish and unreasonable, and do they endeavour to persuade you that they are not sufficiently attested, and there is not ground enough to give credit to them? Though there have been particular answers given to each of these cavils in the first discourse; yet you may give this general and short reply to all of them, and say, "I am sure they are not contrary to reason; for they are divine. They are not incredible, nor do they want sufficient evidence; for God himself by his own Spirit has borne witness to them in my heart: He has wrought an almighty work there by the means of this gospel: He has created me anew unto faith, and hope, and holiness: He has turned my heart from earth to heaven, and subdued the sinful inclinations of my nature by the precepts, by the promises, by the glorious discoveries of this gospel: He has made use of it to save my soul; and I carry about me an uncontroulable proof that it came from heaven." Now though this sort of argument may have but little force in it sometimes for the conviction of the infidel; yet it is of sufficient force to establish the believer.

But I proceed. Do they fill your ears with the mean and contemptible character of the professors of this gospel? Do they charge many of them with vicious practices? Do they tell you of their different opinions, their contests and their quarrels? And do they discourage you by pointing to the apostates that have forsaken the faith? You may defend yourself and your profession against all these objections by the same general argument thus; "Are the professors of it some of the mean and base things of this world? But they are saints, and this gospel has made them so; they are the sons and daughters of the most high God by faith in this gospel; and I will not be ashamed to reckon myself of their society, and to number myself amongst them. Are there many that are called christians, whose lives are vicious? Surely they never knew this gospel in truth; they are but false professors of it. There are thousands that can bear this witness to the gospel, that it has changed their hearts; it has renewed their natures; it has made them hate every vice, and their lives shine amongst men glorious in holiness, and resembling God himself. Are the sentiments of some of them different from others? It is chiefly in points of lesser importance; but the substantial truths of it, which are the power of God to salvation, are professed and acknowledged by us all. And though a thousand should forsake this gospel, and become apostates, yet I can never part with it, while I feel the blessed effects of it abiding upon my heart, and I trust, through the grace of God, they shall abide for ever."

This leads me to the last inference.

IV. What strong engagements is every true christian under to maintain the profession of this gospel! Not only is he laid under many obligations from the commands of God, and the bonds of duty, and gratitude, and love, but he has a constant pressing obligation within him. "How can I be ashamed of my hope, my portion, my everlasting all? Shall I be ashamed of that gospel, upon which my salvation is founded, and my best and highest interest, even my expectations of endless felicity? If I let go this faith, if I lose my hold of this gospel, I let go my hold of Christ, of God, and his love; I let go my hold of heaven, and all my happiness: My sins all return upon me with their insufferable loads of guilt and anguish of conscience, if I lose my faith in this gospel; for all my hope of pardon is built upon

this foundation: Heaven with the joys of it vanish from my soul, if I part with this glorious gospel of Christ, and death and hell face me with all their terrors.

There is an awful and solemn motive derived from the great judgment-day to maintain the profession of this glorious gospel; for our Lord himself has pronounced this threatening, and he will fulfil it, *Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words, amongst a sinful generation of men, I will also be ashamed of him before my Father and his holy angels.* But this text shall be the subject of some future discourses.

HYMN FOR SERMONS XVI. AND XVII.

THE GOSPEL THE POWER OF GOD TO SALVATION.

I.

WHAT shall the dying sinner do,
That seeks relief for all his woe?
Where shall the guilty conscience find
Ease for the torment of the mind?

II.

How shall we get our crimes forgiven,
Or form our natures fit for heaven;
Can souls all o'er defil'd with sin,
Make their own powers and passions clean?

III.

In vain we search, in vain we try,
Till Jesus brings his gospel nigh:
'Tis there such power and glory dwell,
As saves rebellious souls from hell.

IV.

This is the pillar of our hope,
That bears our fainting spirits up:
We read the grace, we trust the word,
And find salvation in the Lord.

V.

Let men or angels dig the mines,
Where nature's golden treasure shines;
Brought near the doctrine of the cross,
All nature's gold appears but dross.

VI.

Should vile blasphemers with disdain
Pronounce the truths of Jesus vain,
I'll meet the scandal and the shame,
And sing and triumph in his name.

SERMON XVIII.

FAITH THE WAY TO SALVATION.

ROM. i. 16.

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST, IT IS THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION TO EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH, TO THE JEW FIRST, AND ALSO TO THE GREEK.

SALVATION is a frequent and familiar word in the mouth of all who call themselves christians. It is a sort of asseveration or oath among the looser and meaner part of mankind; As I hope to be saved. But little do they know what salvation means. All the notion they have of it is this, that they would be saved from going down to hell, a place of fire and torment, and that they would go up to heaven when they die, to some fine unknown shining place above the skies, where they shall be free from all pain and uneasiness. This is the utmost point to which their idea reaches, and I think I have hit their sense exactly in this description. Alas! poor ignorant creatures! They have no thought of being saved from sin, of having their hearts made holy, their sinful inclinations rectified, their passions subdued or refined, their love turned toward God and things spiritual, and their desire and delight fixed upon things divine and holy, instead of their sensual entertainments of flesh and blood. They have no concern about the pardon of the guilt of sin, and restoration to the favour or image of God, and not so much as a wish for the joys that arise from his love, or from the blessed presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in the world to come.

I have shewn you therefore in the foregoing discourse what this salvation is, and made it appear that the gospel is the power of God to salvation; that is, it is a powerful means in the hand of the Spirit of God to save us from the guilt of sin, and to give us a right to heaven; to save us from the power of sin, to fit us for the business and the joys of heaven, and ensure to us the actual possession of it.

There are two things yet remain to be considered in discoursing on this subject:

I. The place or influence that faith, or believing, hath in this salvation; for the gospel provides this blessing only for believers. It is called the power of God to salvation to every one who believes.

II. The wide extent of this glorious benefit: it belongs to every one that believes, whether Greek, or Jew.

I shall treat of each of these particularly.

First, Since the gospel is the power of God to the salvation of them that believe, let us enquire, what place or influence has our faith in this concernment?

To answer this, we may consider faith in its various acts or degrees of exercise, as it begins in assent, as it proceeds to affiance, and as it is completed in assurance; and shew what influence each of them hath in the work of salvation.

1. An assent to the truths of the gospel must begin the work of salvation in us: There

must be a belief and inward conviction of our sinful and dangerous state, which is more clearly revealed under the gospel, and that there is an atonement made for sin by the blood of Christ: We must believe, that there is forgiveness to be found with God, for the sake of this atonement; and that there is grace enough in our Lord Jesus Christ, to renew our sinful natures, and to fit us for heaven. This usually begets in the sinner, who is truly awakened, some desire toward this salvation, and some distant hope of obtaining it. When the poor perishing creature believes and beholds the glorious influence of the death and righteousness of Christ, to justify a sinner in the sight of God; when he surveys the love, the wisdom, the grace, and the power of Christ, answerable to all his wants, he then comes to determine thus with himself, "This salvation is glorious and desirable; the methods proposed, even for my own attainment of it, are practicable and sufficient; and why should not I apply myself to this Saviour, and seek this unspeakable happiness?"

2. Affiance or trust in Jesus Christ the Saviour is the next degree of faith. When we are willing to be delivered from the condemning guilt of sin, and from the defiling power of it, and have seen an all-sufficiency of atonement, grace, and power in Christ, then we commit our souls into the hands of Jesus, the Mediator for this blessed purpose, and make a solemn surrender of our whole selves into his charge and care, that we may be pardoned for the sake of his death, that we may be accepted of God through his righteousness, that we may be sanctified and made holy by his grace and Spirit, and that we may be fitted for and preserved to his heavenly kingdom. We reflect upon our past iniquities, and mourn to think that we have been rebels so long; we are ashamed and grieved for our rebellions, and we now most earnestly desire to be made willing subjects to his holy government; and therefore we entrust our souls with him, and beg that he would take us under his care for this end, and bring us into the Father's presence with comfort and joy. This is the soul's coming to God by Jesus Christ.

Now such an act of faith as this is, has some sensible tendency to promote the peace of a distressed conscience, the sanctification of a sinful nature, the solid hope of heaven, and a preparation for it. But still it must be acknowledged, that its original and chief influence arises from divine appointment. The gospel is the power of God to salvation, and it is by divine promise and power that faith saves the soul. Such a faith, or trust in Christ, has all the promises of gospel-blessings belonging to it. God has appointed in his word, and it is the standing rule of the gospel, *He that believeth shall be saved;* Mark xvi. 15, 16.

All the parts of salvation come by faith: Justification, and favour in the sight of God; Rom. v. i. *Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.* Adoption comes also by faith; Gal. iii. 26. *Ye are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.* Sanctification is ascribed to the same principle; *Acts* xv. 19. The gentiles had their *hearts purified* from sin *by faith.* Joy and hope come in this way also; Rom. xv. 13. *The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.* And you may read several of these benefits of the gospel, these divine ingredients of our salvation put together, and all attributed to faith; *Acts* xxvi. 18. I send thee now to the gentiles, saith the Lord Jesus to St. Paul, *to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified, by faith that is in me.*

Faith, or affiance in Jesus Christ, is an acceptance of this salvation, it is a trust in the offered grace, it is a dependance on the promises of the gospel confirmed by Christ, it is the surrender of a sinful soul to Jesus the Saviour to perform his whole work of grace for him and to him; and thereby the believing sinner, according to the appointment of God in his gospel, partakes of all the benefits that are treasured up in Christ.

Faith in the gospel relieves the distressed soul under a sense of the guilt of sin, and the humble weary sinner finds mercy to forgive, and strength to subdue it. Faith appropriates and applies the blood of Christ, that sovereign medicine, to the wounds of a guilty conscience, and the conscience finds ease and refreshment. It applies the grace of Christ, that powerful antidote, to expel the venom of in-dwelling sin, and the soul is healed in some measure, and the poison is expelled. It lays hold on the power of Christ to assist in the performance of every duty, and it obtains divine assistance. Every true believer has experienced something of these benefits by a sincere surrender of himself to Christ in such a way of trust and holy dependance.

Can the thirsty soul taste of the running water, and not find refreshment, since God, who created water, has ordained it to refresh the thirsty? Can weary limbs lie down on a bed, and not find ease, since a bed is made to give ease and rest to the weary? Can a fainting creature drink a divine cordial appointed to give life, and yet feel no revival? No more can a guilty, distressed, and penitent sinner believe the truths of the gospel, and trust in Jesus the Saviour, and yet find no relief: for this is the will and settled law of the God of heaven, that peace and holiness shall be obtained this way.

3. When faith grows up to assurance, it approaches towards complete salvation. Then the christian can say, "*I know I have believed on the Son* of God, I know I enjoy his favour." Then the holiness and the joy increase, for the salvation enters into the soul in fuller measures: the nearer faith arises to assurance of our own interest in the grace of Christ, the more it supports the soul, the more it comforts, the more it sanctifies, and the more evidently doth the gospel appear to be divinely powerful to save us from sin and hell.

"Can I believe God has pardoned me, so vile a rebel, and forgiven me so many and aggravated offences, and yet is it possible I should not love him, and rejoice? Can I be assured he loves me, and not make him a return of my highest and warmest love? Can I believe that Christ the Son of God died for me, and shall I not consecrate myself and all the powers of my nature to him, that I may live devoted to his service? He has bought me with a price, a dear and valuable price, that of his own blood, and I must *glorify him with my body, and with my soul, which are his;* 1 Cor. vi. 20. Can I believe that I am redeemed from hell and destruction, and shall I dare to walk in the road that leads to it? And not rather *run with patience* and joy *the race that is set before me,* till I arrive at the gates of heaven? Am I not assured that Jesus the beloved of God suffered death for my sins, and shall not I hate sin, which caused his suffering? Sin, which was the occasion of his agonies, and the very sting of his sorrows! *I am crucified* and dead to sin, and to this world, by my union with a crucified Saviour; *yet I live,* saith the divine apostle, *and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who hath loved me, and gave himself for me;* Gal. ii. 20. How is it possible that I should hope to be made like Christ in glory, with a full assurance of arriving thither, and not *purify myself as he is pure;* 1 John iii. 2, 3. While I believe

and am persuaded, that the promise of the joys of heaven shall be fulfilled to me, I would awaken myself hourly to the joyful prospect, and be ever preparing for the possession of that blessedness."

Thus when faith rises to a sublime and eminent degree in this world, the believer may be said to *rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory, and to receive the end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul;* 1 Pet. i. 8, 9.

Before I pass to the second head, I desire leave to make these few remarks.

Remark I. Though the first degree of faith or assent to the gospel be necessary to salvation, yet it is not of itself sufficient; and though the last degree of faith or assurance be gloriously useful in this work, yet it is not absolutely necessary.

A mere assent to the truths of the gospel is not sufficient to save; for there are many who by the force of education, or by the force of argument, yield their assent to the doctrine, and believe it to be true, yet it is a cold, feeble, languid assent; it begins and ends in the head, and never reaches the heart; it does not awaken them thoroughly, nor make them long after the pardon and the grace promised: they seem to sit still contented with the forms of their catechism, and a general belief of the christian religion, so far as they know it; but are under no painful solicitude, or concern of soul about the forgiveness of their sins, the sanctification of their natures, their interest in the favour of God and eternal happiness; and therefore they proceed no farther, they never heartily apply themselves to Jesus Christ the only Saviour, and they fall short of the blessing. The devils believe as much as they do, but are in a state of damnation still.

Again, consider that a full assurance of our own interest in the favour of God through Jesus Christ, is the highest degree of attainment on earth; but it is not necessary to the being of christianity, nor doth it belong to every christian. It is true indeed, that every one ought to seek after it by the frequent exercise of faith and love, and every grace, thus brightening the evidences of his saving interest in the blessings of the gospel daily: and where assurance is obtained upon solid grounds, holiness and joy will rise by swift degrees, and the soul will make glorious advances towards the heavenly state and complete salvation: but some christians scarce ever arrive at this attainment all their days.

Since therefore a mere assent to the gospel in general is not sufficient for salvation, and a full assurance of our own interest is not necessary, it follows, that an affiance or trust in Christ as a Saviour is the most essential and important act of faith. This is that sacred and appointed duty of a convinced soul, whereby it is made partaker of the blessings of salvation according to the gospel, if it be practised in the way which I have just before described.

Remark II. Take notice here of the difference between the law and the gospel, between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. The one gives us life upon our working, the other saves us from death, and gives us a right to heaven upon our believing; therefore one is called *the law of works*, and the other *the law of faith;* Rom. iii. 27.

It is proper here to observe, that the scripture sometimes speaks of two covenants; the old and the new: and means chiefly the economy or dispensation of the Jews under Moses, and the economy of Christ, or the dispensation of the gospel since the Messiah came. But by the two covenants I now speak of, I would be understood to mean the law or constitution of innocency, and the constitution of grace.

By the constitution, or law of innocency, man was to have obtained eternal life before his fall; and as this law or covenant was given to Adam as the head and representative of all mankind, so every son and daughter of Adam continues under it till they accept of the covenant of grace, or the offers of the gospel, either in the darker or brighter discoveries of it: and therefore all mankind, Jews and gentiles, are laid under condemnation by it in the writings of St. Paul, in the second and third chapters to the Romans. By this law of works *every mouth is stopped, and the whole world is become guilty before God;* Rom. iii. 19. Though the nations of the Jews and christians, and perhaps the greatest part of the heathen world, have had some revelations of the gospel or covenant of grace, and have been under the outward offers of it; yet Jews, heathens, and national christians, are all under the sentence of the covenant of the law of works, till they enter into the covenant of grace by repentance and faith in the mercy of God.

But the covenant of grace, or the gospel, is a new constitution, which God hath ordained for the relief of poor fallen miserable man, condemned and perishing under the curse of the law of works. It is a constitution of grace, whereby alone fallen sinners can obtain salvation.

The law of works demands universal obedience to all the commands of God, obedience perfect and persevering; for this is the language of it; *the man that doth them shall live in them;* Rom. x. 5. and it curses every sinner without hope or remedy; *cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them;* Gal. iii. 10, 12. But the voice of the gospel, the righteousness of faith, or the way of justification by Christ, speaketh on this wise, *With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation; for the just shall live by faith;* Rom. x. 10. Gal. iii. 11. The one proclaims eternal life to all that perfectly obey, the other publishes salvation to all that believe, though their obedience be very imperfect.

I grant indeed, that the apostle cites these descriptions of the law of works out of the books of Moses, and therefore some persons would suppose him only to mean the particular law given to the Jews at mount Sinai, and not the general covenant of works made with Adam, and with all mankind in him.

But to this I give these two answers:

1. The law of works, which the apostle speaks of in the epistle to the Romans, particularly in the second and third chapters, cannot signify merely the Jewish law; for it is such a law as includes all the heathen world, as appears plain; *Rom.* ii. 14, 15. and by which the heathens as well as the Jews were condemned, and could never be justified; *Rom.* iii. 20. *By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin;* therefore this must be a law that extended to all mankind, since it stops every mouth, and proclaims the whole world guilty before God.

2. The law given to the Jews, or the covenant of Sinai, so far as it is purely political, was indeed a covenant of works; and their continuance in, or rejection out of the land of Canaan, depended upon their own works, their obedience or disobedience to this law, as is often expressed in the writings of Moses: and upon this account it is used sometimes by the apostle as a very proper emblem or representative of the covenant of works made with our first father Adam, who was to have enjoyed or forfeited some earthly or heavenly paradise, according to his obedience or disobedience. It is plain then, that though St. Paul may cite the law of Moses to shew the nature of a law of works in

general, yet it does not follow that he means only the law or covenant of Sinai; and it is as plain, by his including the gentiles under it, that he does not mean the law of Sinai, but the original law or covenant of works made with all mankind in Adam their father and their head, and of which the law of Sinai was a proper emblem or figure.

All laws of works therefore are insufficient for the salvation of sinful man, and his restoration to God's favour and image, and eternal life. The law of Sinai was a law of works, promising an earthly Canaan to the obedient Jews. The law of innocency in Eden was a law of works, promising life and immortality to obedient mankind. But they have been both wretchedly broken; man was turned out of paradise, and the Jews out of Canaan, because of disobedience. But now the gospel, whereby the Jews or gentiles are to be saved, or to obtain eternal life, requires faith in the mercy and promises of God in and through Jesus Christ; and by this means it saves us, though our obedience be far short of perfection: this was the way whereby the Jews themselves were saved under the Old Testament; for *the gospel was preached to them as well as unto us;* Heb. iv. 2. though it was in darker hints, and types, and figures. And in this way were Abraham and David justified as the apostle teaches; *Rom.* iv. 3, 4, 5, 6.

Though the Jews' enjoyment of the land of Canaan depended on their good works and obedience to the law of Moses, yet their hope and enjoyment of heaven depended on their faith or trust in the mercy of God, which was to be farther revealed in the days of the Messiah. And it is the same gospel by which we are to obtain salvation, since Christ is come in the flesh; but with this difference, that we are now more expressly required to make Jesus Christ the object of our faith, and we have a thousand clearer discoveries of his righteousness and grace than ever the Jews were favoured with.

Happy mankind! though fallen and ruined in Adam, yet recovered and raised to righteousness, grace, and glory by Jesus Christ. How dreadful is that law which pronounces a curse and death upon every transgressor! *Tribulation and wrath, indignation and anguish upon every soul that doth evil, to the Jew first, and also to the gentile;* Rom. ii. 9. But how sweet and reviving is the grace of that gospel, which becomes the power of God to the salvation of every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek!

The great and blessed God saw the frailty of his creature man, how ready he was to ruin himself under a law of works; therefore he appointed his recovery by a law of faith. And *what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the infirmity of our flesh, that he has sent his own Son Jesus Christ in the likeness of sinful flesh,* to do for us, to fulfil all the demands of the law, both in the penalty and the precept, *to finish transgression, to make an end of sin,* by his own sufferings, and to *bring in an everlasting righteousness, that whosoever believes on him shall be saved.* Blessed God! How kind and condescending are thy ways to the children of men! How full of compassion to rebels, who had destroyed themselves! How gentle are the methods of thy recovering mercy! If we will but confess our sins, mourn over our own follies, return to the Lord our God by humble repentance, and put our trust in an almighty Saviour, there is peace and pardon, there is grace, and life, and glory provided for us, and laid up in the hands of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Remark III. Though the gospel offers us salvation by faith and not by works, yet it effectually secures the practice of holiness; since holiness is a part of that salvation. We are saved from sin as well as from hell by this gospel; and we must have our souls

prepared for heaven, as well as brought to the possession of it. He that pretends to trust in Christ, for a deliverance from hell, and has no desire to be made holy, he has no desire after such a salvation as Christ proposes in his gospel, nor is he like to attain it.

We must be sensible then of the corruption of our natures, the perverseness of our wills, the vanity of our minds, the earthliness of our affections, our inability to do that which is good for time to come, as well as our guilt, condemnation and misery, because of our transgressions past: we must desire that a thorough work of repentance may be wrought in our hearts, that the power and reign of sin may be broken there, and that we may become new creatures as well as desire to escape the wrath of God, and hell, and eternal death, if ever we would be partakers of that salvation which the gospel proposes. Christ will not divide one part of his salvation from the other: and in vain do we presume to trust in him for happiness, if we are not willing to be made holy too.

How false and unreasonable are all the reproaches that are cast upon the doctrine of salvation by faith, as though it tended to promote looseness of life, and to indulge iniquity; when that very salvation includes in it a freedom from the power of sin, and a delight in all that is holy! This is the very character of Christ our Saviour, and the reason of *his name Jesus*, that *he should save his people from their sins;* Matt. i. 21. If we are *delivered by Christ*, it is *from this present wicked world;* Gal. i. 4. If we are *redeemed*, it is *from all iniquity, that we might be a peculiar people purified to himself, zealous of good works;* Tit. ii. 14.

Remark IV. Though the gospel is such a glorious doctrine of grace, that there is no reason to be ashamed of it, yet since it saves us by faith, and not by works, there is no reason for us to boast when we are saved. We may *glory* indeed *in the cross of Christ*, and make our boast in the Redeemer all the day long; but the gospel for ever cuts off all ground of boasting in ourselves. Here the justice and mercy of God shine forth gloriously; here the righteousness of God is declared, sinners find remission or pardon, *God is just*, and a *justifier of him who believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith;* Rom. iii. 25, 26, 27. *By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast;* Eph. ii. 8, 9.

The gospel concurs with the law in this respect, that it shews us our own guilt and vileness, our ruin and our impotence to restore ourselves, and therefore it has put all our help upon another. God has *laid our help upon one that is mighty to save;* Psal. lxxxix. 19. and he has ordained that the way whereby we should derive this salvation, is by renouncing all dependance upon self, and trusting in Christ and grace for all that we enjoy and hope for. This is the business of faith: this is the very nature of that christian virtue, to disclaim all self-sufficiency, and receive all from mere mercy; and therefore it is appointed to be the means of our justification under the gospel; therefore it is said so often in scripture, that we are *justified by faith*, that divine grace may have all the glory; *Rom.* iv. 16. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be of grace. We are ignorant and foolish, and must derive wisdom from Christ: we are guilty, and must receive righteousness from him: we are unholy, he is the spring of our sanctification: We are captives and slaves to sin and Satan, and we must have redemption from him: *He is made of God to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, that no flesh might glory in his presence;* but *he that glories, must glory in the Lord;* 1 Cor. i. 29, 30.

Man, innocent man, had power and righteousness, and life put into his own hands;

but the first Adam grew vain in his self-sufficiency, and he foolishly sinned, and lost it all: therefore God, in order to our recovery, would put power, and righteousness, and life into the hands of another, even his own Son, the second Adam, that we might go out of ourselves, and seek it all from another hand. Now faith, or trust, is the proper act of the soul, to express our own emptiness, and our dependance on another for all.

This is the language of faith, "Lord, I am a sinful and guilty creature; I have no righteousness, no merit, to recommend me to thy favour: I have no power to change my unholy nature, and rectify the criminal disorders of my soul; I am unable to subdue the sins that dwell in me, or to practise the required duties of holiness; I deserve condemnation and death, and I am by nature walking in the way to hell; helpless and hopeless for ever in myself, but in thy rich grace is all my hope: I rejoice in the discoveries of thy mercy; I come at the call of thy gospel, upon the bended knees of my soul I accept of the proposals of thy grace; I give up myself to thy power and mercy, as it is revealed in Jesus Christ, thy Son, that I may be saved from sin and hell. To me belongs nothing but shame and confusion of face: I renounce for ever all self-sufficiency, and if ever I am saved, thy grace shall have all the glory." Now when a poor humbled sinner is brought thus far, and receives the salvation of God in this lowly posture of soul, the great God has obtained a good part of his designs in the gospel upon him: self is humbled, grace is glorified, and the sinner is saved by faith.

Remark V. Heaven is made up of believers. The whole number of the saved were once sinners, and obtained salvation by faith.

The holy angels indeed never sinned, and yet whether their confirmed state of holiness and glory is not secured to them by trust or dependance on Christ, may be a reasonable inquiry; for *all things in heaven and earth are* said to be *gathered together, and reconciled in him;* Eph. i. 10. Col. i. 20. But this we are sure of, that not one of all the race of Adam hath been restored to the love of God, or raised to heaven, by their own works, but all by faith. It is sovereign and glorious grace that has saved them all, and that by the gospel too, in the various editions of it, from the promise in Eden, till the full discovery of grace at the day of Pentecost, after the ascension of Christ.

O it is a pleasing entertainment of soul to send our thoughts forward to the last great day, or to send them upward to the courts of heaven and glory, and to hear how the millions of redeemed sinners shout and sing to the honour of divine grace! How all that happy world of believers assist the melody, and dwell upon the delightful sound, "*Not unto us, O God our Father, not unto us, but to thine own name,* and to thy mercy be all our honours paid through the ages of eternity. We were a race of guilty and perishing rebels, who had sinned against thy majesty, and ruined our own souls: we lay upon the borders of death and hell without help, and without hope: we could do nothing to procure thy love, nor merit any thing by the best of our works: but thou hast called us to believe thy gospel, to trust in thy grace, to lay down the arms of our rebellion, and to receive the blessings of salvation by faith: we have nothing to boast of, for we are mere receivers: thou hast put forth thine almighty arm, and hast made thy gospel the instrument of thy power to save us; and while we feel and taste the complete salvation, thy power and thy mercy shall have all the praise.

Not unto us, O Lord Jesus our Saviour, not unto us is any honour due; but to thy condescending love; to thy compassion and death shall our honours be paid, and our acknowledgments made for ever. We saw ourselves helpless, and were directed to thee

for help: we trusted in thee, and thou hast saved us: it is thy sufferings that have procured our pardon; it is by faith in thy blood we find an atonement; it is through thy righteousness that we are justified and accepted of God, and made partakers of these heavenly glories that shine all around us. All our sacred comforts, our excellencies, and our joys are thine. Pride is hidden from our eyes for ever, and boasting is banished from all our tongues: It is thou hast fulfilled the law; it is thou hast suffered the curse; it is thou hast purchased, and promised, and bestowed the blessing. We believed thy word, we received thy grace, and behold, we, dying sinners, are raised to life, and advanced to glory. There is not a soul of us but delights to join in these sublime anthems of worship; *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing: Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be to Him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever.*" Amen.

HYMN FOR SERMON XVIII.

FAITH THE WAY TO SALVATION.

I.

NOT by the laws of innocence
Can Adam's sons arrive at heaven;
New works can give us no pretenee
To have our aneient sins forgiven.

II.

Not the best deeds that we have done,
Can make a wounded conseienee whole:
Faith is the grace, and faith alone,
That flies to Christ, and saves the soul.

III.

Lord, I believe thy heavenly word,
Fain would I have my soul renew'd:
I mourn for sin, and trust the Lord,
To have it pardon'd and subdu'd.

IV.

O may thy grace its power display,
Let guilt and death no longer reign:
Save me in thine appointed way,
Nor let my humble faith be vain.

SERMON XIX.

NONE EXCLUDED FROM HOPE.

ROM. i. 16.

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST,—IT IS THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION TO EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH, TO THE JEW FIRST, AND ALSO TO THE GREEK.

WE have seen the gospel of Christ vindicated in the former discourses on this text, and the glorious doctrines of it guarded against the various reproaches of an unbelieving world: We have heard what a powerful instrument it is in the hand of God for the salvation of perishing sinners. We have been taught the way to partake of this salvation, and that is by believing; and we have learned what influence our faith has in this sacred concernment. I proceed now to the last thing which I proposed, and that is to shew the wide extent of this blessing of the gospel; for it brings *salvation to every one that believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

Where the word Greek is used in opposition to the barbarian, as it is in the fourteenth verse before my text, it signifies the learned part of mankind, as distinguished from those that are unlearned; the Greeks being the most famous among the nations for wisdom, knowledge, or learning in that day: But when this same word stands in opposition to the Jew, as it does here in my text, then it includes all the heathen world, so that when the apostle says, the gospel brings salvation both to the Jew and the Greek, he shews the extent of this benefit to all mankind that hear and receive it.

It may be worth our while to spend a few hints upon the order in which the apostle represents the communication of this blessing, *viz.* to the Jew first, and then to the Greek or gentile.

When he describes, in the second chapter of this epistle, the terms or conditions of the covenant of works, he sets mankind in the same order; he pronounces *indignation and wrath upon every soul that doth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the gentile; but glory, honour and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the gentile.* So when he declares the blessings of the covenant of grace or the gospel, he brings the salvation first upon the Jews, and then upon the gentile nations: And one reason of it may be this, that the Jews having been favoured with an earlier and more express discovery of the nature and will of God than the heathens, they seem to stand fairest for the participation of divine blessings, and that, even by the law of works, if life and righteousness could have been obtained by it, as well as by the covenant of grace, or law of faith. But if they abuse their knowledge, and their sacred advantages, to the neglect of God and godliness, faith and works, they justly fall under a more severe condemnation every way, because their guilt is greater.

But there may be some special reasons given why God thought it proper, in the course of his providence, to send the notice of this salvation by Jesus Christ among the Jews, before he sent it to the gentile world.

I. The Jews were the chosen people of God, the sons and daughters of Abraham, his friend, the first favourites of heaven, considered as a family and a nation: and as he first preached to them the purity and perfection of his law, whence they might discover their own sin and misery, so he published his gospel of grace by Jesus Christ first among them, and sent his Son with the messages of peace and forgiveness first to their nation. The great God thought it becoming his equity to publish his abounding mercy first toward them, amongst whom he first published his law, to shew them their guilt and misery through the abounding of sin: *By the law is the knowledge of sin; and where sin has abounded, grace has much more abounded;* Rom. iii. and v.

II. The Jews had this same gospel preached to them many ages before in types and emblems, in sacred ceremonies and dark prophecies. Now it was fit, that the types and prophecies should be explained, and the grace contained therein revealed first to them; for hereby the gospel obtained a great confirmation, and established its own truth, when it appeared in all the parts of it so exactly answerable to the ancient figures, and to the predictions of many hundred years. It was fit that the Messiah should appear among them first, where his character and picture had been drawn for many ages before, that so he might be known and distinguished whensoever he should visit the world. It was fit that his doctrine should be first published in plain language, where it had been long written and spoken in metaphors. Thus the gospel went forth first from Jerusalem, that it might be preached and proclaimed with more glorious evidence among the rest of the nations.

III. Jesus Christ, who is the subject and substance of the gospel, was himself a Jew, of the seed of Abraham, of the nation of Israel. He was born, he lived, he died amongst them. All the great affairs of his birth, his life, his ministry, his death and resurrection, were transacted in their country, and in the midst of them. It was fit the benefit thereof should be first offered to them.

If this gospel of Christ had been first preached to the gentiles, while it was kept silent and secret amongst the Jews, there might have been reason to suspect that there was some fraud or falsehood at the bottom, and that this doctrine would not bear the light in the country where these things were done, and that it would not stand the test of examination in the land of Judea, and therefore the story was told first among strangers: And thus the gentiles might have found some difficulty to receive it, and been prejudiced against the belief of it. But now, when it is published through all the land of Israel, and the apostles appeal to their own countrymen for the truth of these transactions; when it has stood the test of public examination there, where the things were transacted, it goes forth to the rest of the nations with brighter evidence and glory.

IV. I might add in the last place, that it was fit it should be first published to the Jews, who seemed to have the first claim to it; that since they refused it, it might be offered to the poor gentile nations with greater justice and equity, even the Jews themselves being judges. Such are the frequent hints given by St. Paul, *Acts* xiii. 46. *It was necessary that the word of God should have been first spoke to you; but seeing*

ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the gentiles. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the gentiles, and they will hear it; Acts xxviii. 28.

When we think of that poor unhappy nation, the Jews, scattered abroad among all the kingdoms of the earth, banished from their own promised land for their rejection of Christ, and yet hardened in their unbelief, methinks we should send out a groan of pity for them; for they are the sons and daughters of Abraham, the first favourites of our God. Jesus our Saviour was their Messiah, their kinsman and their rightful king. We should send up a kind wish to heaven upon their account, "How long, O Lord, how long shall Israel be cast off? How long wilt thou be angry with the children of Abraham, thy friend? When shall the day come for the opening of their eyes, that they may *look on Jesus whom they pierced*, and believe *and mourn?* When shall *the veil be taken off from their hearts*, that they may read the books of Moses, and trust in Jesus of Nazareth whom their fathers crucified."

When we see one and another of the Jewish nation in this great city, and think of their blindness and their zeal for the idle traditions of their teachers, and observe their ignorant rage against our blessed Saviour; when we behold the vain superstitions of their worship, the thick darkness that hangs upon them under the brightest beams of gospel light, and their wide distance from salvation, we should let our eyes affect our hearts, and drop a tear of compassion upon their souls. "These were they to whom the promises of salvation did first belong, and to whom the first news was brought, that *Jesus the Saviour is born*. These are they to whom the gospel was first preached. God himself dwelt in the midst of them, and the Son of God was their brother, their flesh and their blood. Though they are for a season cast off for their infidelity, yet God has told us, that he has a secret love for that nation still for their father Abraham's sake; *Rom.* xi. 28. and this love shall break forth in its full glory one day. Make haste, O *Deliverer*, who didst *come out of Zion*, make haste to fulfil thy promises, and *turn away ungodliness from Jacob*. Let the *fulness of the gentiles be brought in, and let all Israel be saved*. Bring them back from all the lands whither thine anger hath scattered them. Release thy ancient people from their long captivity to Satan, and their bands of thick darkness. Be thou, O *Jesus who art the light of the gentiles*, be thou also *the glory of thy people Israel*."

But I would endeavour to make a larger improvement of this general head of discourse.

Does the gospel bring salvation to every one that believes without exception; to all ranks and characters, and degrees, and orders of men? Then let this grace be spread far abroad: And let not the more polite and nicer hearers grow tired, or drowsy, or disdainful, while I amplify a little, and diffuse my thoughts into various particulars, pointing out the variety of the subjects of this grace; for I would, as it were, mention every sinner by name, that they may not be left only to unaffecting general notions, but being especially addressed, they may all come and partake of this salvation by believing this gospel.

A glorious and extensive gospel indeed, and a wide-spreading salvation! To *every one who believes!* None excluded from this blessing!

1. It is not confined to one nation, or one family, not to one tribe or kindred of mankind, as the law of Moses was. *Go preach the gospel*, says our Lord, *to every creature;* Mark xvi. 15. *Preach repentance and remission of sins in my name among*

all nations, beginning at Jerusalem; Luke xxiv. 47. To the Jew first, but let not this grace be confined to them: Publish this blessed doctrine also to the sinners among the Greeks and gentiles. You that are afar off from God, even in the *ends of the* earth, ye are called to *look unto Christ, and be saved,* Isaiah xlv. 22. It is no matter, O sinner! what thy father was, or what thy kindred are! if thou art but a believer in Christ, thy soul is happy, thy sins are pardoned, *the gospel is the power of God to thy salvation.*

2. It is not confined to one sex only, or to one age. The children are called as well as the fathers, and men and women are invited to partake of this blessing together in Christ. *There is neither male nor female,* neither young nor old, neither Greek nor Jew, that have any distinction put upon them, to exclude them from this grace; *they are all one in Christ Jesus;* Gal. iii. 28. Children, have you seen the evil of your sins, and the danger of hell? Do you long for pardoning and saving grace, and are you willing that Christ should make your peace with God, that he should enable you to serve him upon earth, and prepare you for heaven? Come then, trust in this gospel, give up yourselves to Jesus Christ the Saviour in the manner I have spoken, and the salvation is yours. Nor let old sinners thrust away this mercy from them, under a pretence that they have long abused it. You are now under the joyful sound of the gospel; you sit now under the language of inviting love: Are you willing to be made new creatures before you die, and to accept of a deliverance from hell, though you are upon the very borders of it? Behold power enough in this gospel to deliver you: The blood of Christ can wash out stains of the longest continuance; the Spirit of Christ can change the skin of an old Ethiopian, and create an old inveterate transgressor into holiness. This gospel could save the thief upon the cross, and insure paradise to him. It can rescue a dying rebel from eternal death; for it gives life and salvation to every one that believes.

3. It is not limited to one rank or condition of men in the civil life, but reaches to persons of every circumstance. The rich and the poor, the master and the servant, the prince and the peasant, must partake of salvation by the same faith in the Son of God. The barbarian and the Scythian, who seem to be born for slaves, and the Romans who are lords of the earth, *the bond and the free,* have all an equal call to receive this salvation; *Col.* iii. 11. Ye are all rich enough to obtain it; There is no purchase of these blessings by any other price but that of the blood of Jesus. Silver and gold, and the treasure of kings, are all contemptible offers in so sacred a concernment as this is. The benefit is too valuable to be bought at any meaner rate: Christ, who paid for it, will bestow it freely on all. If the rich will receive it, they must come without money, and without price, and accept of the free gift of God, as humble petitioners at his footstool; and the poor *that have no money, come ye and buy;* Isa. lv. 1, 2. Let the vilest meanest creature come to this treasury of grace, and with thankfulness receive the salvation, for it is bought already. You are called only to trust in this gospel, to surrender yourselves to this Saviour, and the salvation shall be yours. Ye that are mean and low and base in this world, there are many of your brethren already joined in the fellowship of this gospel: Come, enter yourselves into the blessed fraternity. *To the poor the gospel is preached,* and the poor receive it. But there are some noble, there are some great, there are some rich, that have felt the power of it too: There is Philemon the master, and his servant Onesimus, joined in the same faith, and partakers of the same salvation; *Philemon* 16.

Again, 4. It is not confined to persons whose intellectual excellencies are superior to their neighbours, or who exceed others in understanding and the acquirements of the mind. St. Paul was *debtor both to the wise and the unwise;* to the learned Greek, and to the ignorant and unpolished barbarian; *Rom.* i. 14. He preached the gospel to all of them, for Christ had a chosen number amongst them all. If the witty, and the wise, and the learned, will lay down their pride, and submit to the doctrine of Christ crucified, and not call it foolishness: If they will humble their understandings to receive the sacred mysteries of our religion, *God manifest in the flesh*, and put to death for the sins of men, and will place the concerns of their eternal welfare into the hands of him who hung bleeding upon the cross: If they are willing to *be converted and become as little children*, there is a door for them to enter into the kingdom of heaven. And as for you, whose understandings are weak and unpolished with human learning, this is a doctrine and a gospel exactly fitted for your character: It is no business of great sagacity, no ingenious matter to become a christian. Believe the truths that are plainly revealed concerning your own sin and misery, and the power of Jesus Christ to save you; bewail your own wretchedness and guilt, and intrust yourselves in the arms of his grace, that ye may be made holy and happy, and ye also shall become possessors of the same kingdom. *Father, I thank thee, Lord of heaven and earth, that though these things may be hidden from the wise and the prudent, yet thou hast revealed them to babes;* Matt. xi. 25, 26.

But I pursue the distributions of this grace yet farther.

5. No particular tempers or constitutions of men, no different qualities of soul or body, can exclude those that believe from the grace or blessings of this gospel. *Let not the strong man glory in his strength*, nor the comely figures of human nature boast themselves in their beauty. Let not the weak be overwhelmed with despair, nor the deformed or uncomely stand afar off and abandon their hopes; the same Saviour proposes the riches of his grace to all. Learn therefore to look upon all your natural advantages, and all your natural discouragements, with a negligent eye in the matter of your salvation. If you would be strong to win heaven, you must borrow all your strength from Christ and the gospel: If you would appear comely and honourable before the face of God, you must be clothed in *the robe of righteousness, and the garments of salvation*, which he has prepared; *Isaiah* lxi. 10.

Nor can any difference in the natural qualities of the soul forbid any person who believes in Christ to hope for this salvation. Those who are by nature proud or peevish, sullen or passionate, angry or revengful, have been made partakers of this grace, as well as those who by the complexion of their animal frame, and the original temper of their minds, have had more of the natural virtues belonging to them; such as gentleness, meekness of spirit, good-humour and kindness. Those who have something in their very frame that is sly and crafty, or covetous, wanton, and intemperate, have felt the power of this gospel, as well as those that have been generous and sincere, modest, chaste, and abstemious; for the grace of the gospel, which was typified by the ark of Noah, takes in all manner of animals, clean and unclean, and saves them from the deluge of divine wrath that shall come upon an ungodly world. But there is this blessed difference, that the brutes went out of the ark with the same nature they brought in; but those who come under the protection and power of this gospel by faith, they are in some measure changed, they are refined, they are sanctified. The wolf that came in, is

turning into a lamb, and the raven by degrees becomes a dove; surely, the gospel has begun to make them so, for it has begun their salvation.

I will grant indeed, that the perverse temper of blood and spirits, and the very make of the man, as to his natural and vicious qualities, is seldom entirely altered by the grace of God here on earth. There will be some sallies of animal nature, some outbreakings of the irregular fire that is pent up in the constitution; and these will too often mix themselves with our conduct; and interline our acts of virtue and duty. But the holy soul, who believes in Christ, will be humble, will mourn, will accuse and chide itself before God in secret, and will be importunate and restless in prayer for the victory. The christian will not suffer himself to be carried away willingly by the stream of vicious inclinations; for *he that is born of God sinneth not;* 1 John v. 18. and it is in vain to talk of the gospel and salvation, of faith and grace, if we give up the reins to vicious nature, and bid a careless farewel to any one virtue.

But to proceed yet farther in reckoning up the various characters of men, whom the gospel makes christians by the grace of faith.

6. As no persons are excluded because of their natural constitution, so neither are any forbid the blessing of salvation because of their former ill characters in the moral life. Not the greatest of sinners are shut out from this blessing, if they repent and believe the gospel. Not the Jews who crucified the Lord of glory: Not the gentiles or Greeks, who were slaves to superstition and idolatry, and drenched in most infamous and abominable practices; the Greeks who gave themselves up to work uncleanness with greediness, without God, and without hope in the world. One gospel has saved them all. No former follies or faults, no, not the greatest of sins against man, or against God himself, ought to shut up a humble soul under despair; for *this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came to save the chief of sinners;* 1 Tim. i. 15. And that is a word of most extensive grace which our Saviour speaks; Matt. xii. 31. *All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.*

You who have enjoyed a happy education, and had pious parents to boast of, as the Jews boasted of Abraham; you who have many shining works of sobriety and righteousness, you are called to come and trust in this gospel: But you must renounce all your pretended merit, and accept of pardoning grace, or you can never be saved. And you that have nothing that looks like a good work to glory in, sinners as bad as the worst of gentiles, come, and believe this gospel, and surrender yourselves to Jesus the Prince and the Saviour; his blood is all-sufficient for the pardon of your sins, his righteousness is all-sufficient for your justification; and his Spirit can purify your sinful natures. *Where sin has abounded, grace has much more abounded;* Rom. v. 20. It is to the everlasting honour of *the gospel of Christ*, that it has appeared to be *the power of God to the salvation* of multitudes of such as you: *Such were some of you*, saith the apostle to the *Corinthians; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God;* 1 Cor. vi. 11.

And surely if great degrees of sin cannot exclude the penitent soul from the benefit of the gospel; then, 7, Neither shall any person be excluded because of the weak degrees of his faith: *Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye; for Christ has received him;* Rom. xiv. 1, 3. Read that kind condescending promise, and believe it; Matt. xii. 20. *He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax*, nor suppress, nor despise the least, the lowest desires of grace: He will encourage the youngest and

the feeblest acts of sincere repentance and true faith, though struggling under much sin and darkness, till it break out into evident and active flame. The little tender seed of grace under his heavenly influences shall bud, and blossom, and spring up into full glory.

How large and glorious is the salvation that attends faith in this gospel! How extensive is the grace of God our Saviour! How unsearchable are the riches of his mercy! *O the heights and the depths, the lengths and breadths of the love of Christ, that pass all knowledge!* None of the sons or daughters of Adam, the sinner, are excluded from this salvation, where the gospel is preached, but those who exclude themselves by stubbornness and unbelief. Persons of every kind, every character, condition and quality, amongst men, have found this *gospel become the power of God to their salvation*, when they have fled to this refuge, and believed in this Saviour.

What improvement now shall I make of the last part of this discourse, this wide extent of salvation bestowed on all who believe? Has every single believer this salvation in some measure conferred on him, and wrought in him? Then here is a plain and evident test, whereby to try our faith, or a certain sign whereby we may judge, whether we are true believers, or no.

The gospel is the manifestation of the power of God for the salvation of every one that believes. What have you found of this salvation begun in you? What have you felt of your own guilt and wretchedness by reason of sin, and of your danger of eternal death? Have you seen the death of Christ as an effectual atonement to procure the forgiveness of an offended God? Have you beheld the power and grace of Christ sufficient to renew your sinful natures, and to form them after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness? Have you found your conscience resting upon the sacrifice of Christ, and your souls humbly expecting pardon and peace there? Are your hearts turned away from every sin? Is the temper of your mind made divine and heavenly, and suited to the business and blessedness of the upper world? This is the salvation of Christ which the gospel proposes, and bestows upon all that believe.

Upon such solemn enquiries as these, I am persuaded there is many a soul must take up this heavy complaint, "Alas! I fear I am no believer: I have sat long under the sound of the gospel, and I have heard the doctrine of Christ crucified many years to no purpose; for I have never found this gospel attended with any such powerful impressions as to begin salvation in me. I have been too thoughtless about the guilt of my sins, and about the forgiveness of them in the court of heaven. Nor have I found my sinful nature changed, nor my affections sanctified. I have very little of these spiritual desires and delights which have been before described as part of my salvation, I feel the inward workings of my soul vain and carnal still; I am not prepared for the heavenly world, and surely then I have never truly believed in Christ, nor received his gospel."

To such complaints as these, I would propose these three several answers:

Answer 1. It may be so indeed. All this complaint may be just and true; and perhaps thou art an unbeliever still, dead in trespasses and sins, and exposed every moment to the stroke of death, and to everlasting misery. This is the case of many a thousand beside thyself: Even the greatest part of those who are called christians, are yet afar off from God and from salvation, and have no just ground to suppose that they are believers in Christ. But it is of infinite concern for thee, O sinner, to busy thyself about this enquiry. There is not any one act in thy life, in which thou canst

be engaged, that is of greater and more awful importance than this; for thy heaven or thy hell depends upon it.

Some sit all their days under the gospel, and hear nothing but the outward sound, always unmoved, unawakened, and unaffected; slumbering and nodding upon the borders of eternal fire; while others hear the voice of the Son of God, arise from the dead, and receive a new, a divine life. Some in the same family, perhaps of thy own kindred, thy flesh and blood, or some that are upon the same seat in the public assembly, are convinced and converted, believe in Christ, and are saved; while thou remainest a hard and impenitent sinner under the voice of the same grace, and the preaching of the same salvation.

And if this be thy case, it is a dreadful one indeed. Consider, how will thy condemnation be aggravated, that thou hast heard the gospel published with so much glorious evidence in such a land, and such an age of light as this is, and yet thou abidest in the state of impenitence, and unbelief, and death. Thou hast had the blessings of heaven offered at thy door, and hast hitherto refused to receive them. Thou hast sat, as it were, on the banks of the *river of life*, and never desired to taste the *living water*. Thou hast dwelt near the shadow of the *tree of life*, but art an utter stranger to the fruit. O! with what a stupid and a careless ear hast thou heard the things of thy everlasting peace! Think of it therefore, and be horribly afraid: If the gospel be not powerful for the salvation of thy soul, it will become through thy own impenitence, a powerful means to increase thy damnation, to make thy hell hotter, and thy eternal sorrows more intolerable. *Woe to thee*, Capernaum! *Woe to thee*, Bethsaida! Woe unto you, O sinners of Great Britain, ye have been exalted to heaven in divine favours, and ye shall be thrust down to hell, if ye continue in unbelief. *It shall be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for you;* Matt. xi. 21.

But art thou indeed yet an unbeliever? Yet sleeping the sleep of death? It may be this is thy awakening time: It may be this is the hour when thou shalt begin to hear the voice of God in order to life. O cherish such important thoughts as these. Let them arise with thee in the morning, let them lie down at night with thee, and give thyself no rest, nor give rest to the God of heaven, nor to Jesus Christ the Saviour, till he has received thy soul into the arms of his love, forgiven thy sins, and made thee a new creature, that the gospel may not be to thy soul the savour of eternal death.

II. But perhaps the person who makes this complaint, may be some humble, melancholy christian, some sincere believer in Christ, and yet under dark and timorous apprehensions, concerning his own state. It may be, poor trembling soul, that thou hast found the preaching of the gospel to be the power of God to thy salvation, though thou art not able rightly to evidence it to thy own conscience.

Thou hast not the joy of pardon indeed, but hast thou not some glimmering hopes? Surely thou dost not abandon thyself to utter despair? Thou hast not assurance that Christ has accepted of thee; but art thou not sincerely willing to surrender thyself to him, to receive his complete salvation in the holiness as well as the happiness of it? Dost thou not long to be pardoned and accepted of God, for the sake of his death and obedience? And art thou not heartily desirous to give him all the honour of thy salvation? Thou hast not much power against sin, but dost thou not hate it with immortal hatred, and esteem it thy constant enemy? Does it not often cause thee to mourn before the Lord,

because of thy captive state, and the working of in-dwelling iniquities? Perhaps thou dost not yet feel thyself to be manifestly saved from sin, but art thou not saved from the love of sin? It dwells in thy flesh, it may be, and raises tumults there, but not in thy desire and thy delight. Canst thou not say with the apostle; Rom. vii. 23, 24. *There is a law in my members warring against the law of my mind?* But it is a daily torment to me, *O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?* Thou dost not love God, it may be, according to thy wish and desire; but is there any thing which thou valuest more than God and his love? Art thou not truly willing to love him above all things, to be renewed and sanctified in all the powers of thy nature, to be fitted for the business of heaven, and suited to the blessedness.

If thy heart can echo to this sort of language, and the grace of God has prevailed thus far in thee, then thy salvation is begun; the gospel has shewn its divine power upon thee, and thou art indeed to be numbered among the believers.

III. But I would conclude my discourse with a word that may have equal respect to saints or sinners. If you are concerned sincerely about your eternal welfare, but can see no comfortable evidences in yourselves of the work of faith, or the beginnings of salvation, if all within you appear to be guilt and sin, and there is much of hell and darkness in the soul, yet do not cast away all hope: Arise and come to Jesus the Saviour, behold he calleth you. This is the reason of the grace of the gospel, *This is the accepted time, this is the day of salvation.* Make haste now to the city of refuge, fly now to the hope that is set before you.

The promises are held open to thee, O soul! whosoever thou art, even the promises of light and life, of grace and eternal glory. Christ Jesus invites thee by the messengers of his gospel: If there be some darkness upon thy Spirit, do not spend all thy time in laborious and fruitless enquiries whether thou hast heretofore believed in Christ, or no; but come now with an humble sense of thy guilty and sinful circumstances, and surrender thyself to his charge and care by a new act of faith, or trust, or dependance. Plead with him to accept a vile criminal over-loaded with guilt and misery, and to make thee accepted with God by a righteousness which was not thy own. Beseech him to look with pity on thy unholy soul, to sanctify and renew it, to take thy hard heart into his hand, and soften it into repentance. Plead with him, and say, Lord, art not thou exalted to give repentance as well as remission? Entreat of him to subdue thy sins, to new-mould and create all the powers of thy nature in the beauties of holiness, and to prepare thee for the heavenly state. Go and complain humbly at his mercy-seat, how long thou hast sat under the ministry of his own gospel, and felt no divine power attending it. Intrust thyself now to his care, and place thyself by faith under his divine influences. *He that comes* in this manner, *shall in no wise be cast out,* for the Lord has promised to receive him; *John* vi. 37. Wait on him with daily importunity, follow all the means of grace which he hath appointed, and the gospel of Christ shall appear in due time to be the power of God, even thy God, to thy salvation. *Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMON XIX.

NONE EXCLUDED FROM HOPE.

I.

JESUS, thy blessings are not few,
Nor is thy gospel weak;
Thy grace can melt the stubborn Jew,
And heal the dying Greek.

II.

Wide as the reach of Satan's rage,
Doth thy salvation flow:
'Tis not confin'd to sex or age,
The lofty or the low.

III.

While grace is offer'd to the prince,
The poor may take their share:
No mortal has a just pretence,
To perish in despair.

IV.

Be wise, ye men of strength and wit,
Nor boast your native powers;
But to his sovereign grace submit,
And glory shall be yours.

V.

Come, all ye vilest sinners, come,
He'll form your souls anew:
His gospel and his heart have room
For rebels such as you.

VI.

His doctrine is almighty love;
There's virtue in his name,
To turn the raven to a dove,
The lion to a lamb.

SERMON XX.

CHRISTIAN MORALITY, viz. TRUTH, SINCERITY, &c.

PHILIP. iv. 8.

FINALLY, BRETHREN, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE TRUE, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE HONEST, *OR GRAVE*, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE JUST, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE PURE, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE LOVELY, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE OF GOOD REPORT; IF THERE BE ANY VIRTUE, AND IF THERE BE ANY PRAISE, THINK ON THESE THINGS.

Οσα εστιν αληθη, &c.

FAITH and practice make up the whole of our religion: A sacred compound, and divinely necessary to our happiness and our heaven! Nor does the blessed apostle in any of his writings ever dwell so entirely on one of them, as to forget the other. In this letter to the saints at Philippi, practice has the largest share. Through every chapter he scatters up and down particular directions for the conduct of those believers who dwelt among the gentiles; but he gives them two general rules, by which they were to walk. The first is in the beginning of his epistle; *Philip.* i. 27. *Let your conversation be as becomes the gospel.* Act always agreeable to the temper and design of that gospel, which brings salvation by Jesus Christ, and then you will certainly practise every virtue of life; your carriage can never be amiss.

And toward the latter end of his letter he saith, *Finally, brethren*, before I take my leave of you, I would give you another general rule to direct your practice: I would recommend holiness to you under another view, and describe it in such colours and characters, as will not only approve themselves to your fellow-christians, but even to the heathens among whom you live, *that you may be*, as he expresses it in *chap.* ii. *ver.* 15. that *ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke in a wicked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;* that they that have a mind to speak evil of christianity, and cast what reproaches they can upon the doctrine of the cross, may not be able to find any flaw in your conversation, or any ground to slander the doctrine which you profess.

The rule is this, whatsoever the light of nature, and the better sort of heathens, esteem true and honest, or decent, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report, let these things be your meditation, let these be your constant aim and design, let these be the business of your lives, and your perpetual practice: Think of these things, says the apostle, and think of them so as to perform them.

In a day wherein the professors of christianity, and of the glorious doctrines of the gospel, grow degenerate and loose in their lives, and fall sometimes into vices, which the better sort of the heathens have utterly condemned, I think it may not be amiss to stir you up together with myself to all holy watchfulness and caution; that christianity in

our profession and in our practice may appear and shine in its own bright raiment; *that the doctrine of God our Saviour may be adorned in all things*, and that it may look, as it is indeed in itself, a doctrine according to godliness.

Without any further preface, or division of the words, I shall take these several sentences in the text, as so many distinct characters of morality, or virtue, which the apostle recommends; and in discoursing of each of them, I shall follow nearly the same method; *viz.*

I. Shew the sense, latitude, and extent of the duty.

II. Make it appear, that these duties are required by the law of nature.

III. Discover what additional influence the gospel should have upon our consciences to the meditation and performance of such duties; and sometimes,

IV. I shall give directions toward the performance of them, and guard against the contrary sins.

Whatsoever things are true. The first thing that the apostle mentions is this, whatsoever things are true, let these be our meditation, and our practice.

First, Let me shew the sense, latitude, and extent of this advice.

Truth in general lies in a conformity of one thing to some other which is made the standard or rule of it. So a picture is said to be true, when it is conformable to the face and figure of the person: So a copy of any writing is true, when it is conformable to the original. So a narrative or history is true, when it describes matters fairly as they were transacted, and tells the circumstances just as they are. And that is true doctrine which is conformable to the word of God, which is the rule and standard of divine truth.

But none of these agree to the design of my text. For the apostle here is describing moral characters, and the duties of a christian. Truth in this place is not so much to be considered as seated in the understanding, as it is in the will. It signifies here integrity and uprightness, in opposition to hypocrisy, insincerity, or moral falsehood. And there are three things that make up the perfect character of truth or integrity:

1. That our words be conformable to our hearts.

2. That our deeds be conformable to our words.

3. That our whole carriage be conformable to itself, and consistent with itself at all times, and in all places.

1. The first thing wherein this virtue consists, is in the conformity of our words to our hearts. This is sometimes called veracity, sometimes sincerity; a necessary duty that belongs to every christian; and that in all the affairs of life. We must be sincere in all relations of matters of fact; in all the narratives or accounts we give either of persons or things, in all our discoveries of our esteem for other men, and in all our professions of love and goodwill to others. Whatsoever we speak, it ought to be agreeable to the sentiment of our souls.

Let us first consider what is that truth that is required in relating matters of fact, and narratives concerning things or persons. This is what Solomon mentions; *Prov.* xii. 17. *He that speaketh truth, sheweth forth righteousness; but a false witness deceit.* In the xvth Psalm, ver. 2. it is the character of one of those who shall inhabit the holy mountain of God, that he not only worketh righteousness, but he speaketh the truth in his heart. That which he thinks in his heart to be true, he clothes it in words, and thus delivers it out to his fellow-creatures. The apostle in *Eph.* iv. 25. makes mention of the same duty, and presses it upon those to whom he writes; *Wherefore putting away lying*,

speak every man truth with his neighbour; for we all are members one of another; Members one of another, as we belong to the same original, as we are born of the same first parents, as we are made of one flesh and blood, as we are parts of the same civil society or nation, and especially as we that profess christianity are related to one another in nearer and diviner bonds, as we are members of the general church or body of Christ. Now it does not become those that are joined in so near a relation, to lie and speak falsely, and deceive one another, no more than the members of the natural body should do injury to each other, whose single welfare lies much in the welfare of the whole body.

I grant it is possible for the best and wisest of men sometimes to be mistaken in their apprehensions of things, and they may happen to speak something that is false in the course of their conversation: for they may be deceived themselves, and not know the truth. But in matters which they have occasion to speak of, they ought to be as well informed of the truth of things as present circumstances will admit, and to say nothing to their neighbour but what they really believe themselves. When we speak a thing which we sincerely believe, and it happens not to be true, that is properly called a MISTAKE, for we had no design to deceive the person we converse with. But when we speak the thing that is false, and we know it to be false, or do not believe it to be true, this is wilfully to deceive our neighbour; and is properly called by the odious name of LYING.

It is granted also, that no person is always obliged to speak all that he knows, when he is giving an account of some particular affair or concern of life. There are several seasons, wherein it is a piece of great prudence to be silent, and not to publish all the truth. We have a most remarkable instance of this in the prophet Jeremiah, when he had been admitted to the speech of Zedekiah the king, and had given him divine counsel, that he should submit himself to the Chaldeans, and save his life, and preserve the city from burning, and at the same time had intreated for himself, that he might not return to Jonathan's house and the dungeon, lest he died there. A little after, the princes of Israel demanded of him what discourse he had with the king; he concealed his chief business from the princes, which was about submission to the Chaldeans, and told them that he *presented his supplication to the king, that he would not cause him to return to Jonathan's house, so the princes left off speaking with him, and the matter was not perceived;* Jer. xxxviii. 24, &c. There may be various occasions in life, wherein it is proper to keep ourselves upon the reserve. Silence is much commended by Solomon, who was made divinely wise; Prov. xxix. 11. *A fool uttereth all his mind; but a wise man keepeth it in till afterward.*

Yet it must be confessed too, that sometimes the concealment of part of the truth, when it is necessarily due to the hearer, in order to pass a right judgment of the whole, is almost as criminal as a lie: And herein consists the guilt of partial representations. But I cannot stay to discuss this point at large.

The great rule of veracity in general lies in being just and fair in our narratives and representations of things, and in saying nothing but what we believe to be true. Whatsoever therefore we have to speak to our fellow-creatures, let us lay a charge upon our consciences perpetually, that we speak according to the sentiments of our hearts; and remember, that what disguises soever our tongues put on, God our Judge sees through them all.

And not only when we relate matters of fact, but when we express our sentiment of the characters of men, let us be just to truth. I confess, brotherly love generally requires us to put the most favourable colours on a blemished character, and say the softest things that the matter will bear; love covereth a multitude of faults and follies, and in this case silence often becomes us best. But when providence and duty require us to speak, no pretences of love or charity are sufficient to excuse a falsehood.

Again, when we have a bright character upon our tongues, or when we are paying civilities to our neighbours or friends, let us take heed of being lavish beyond what truth will allow. The sins of complaisance may be connived at or applauded by men, and miscalled by the name of good breeding; but the eye and ear of God take a juster and more severe notice of the softest and smoothest falsehoods.

In all the discoveries of our esteem for other men, let us speak no more than we in our hearts believe. It is a character of a very vicious time, and a very degenerate and corrupt age, in *Psal.* xii. 2. *They speak every one with his neighbour, with flattering lips, and with a double heart do they speak; but the Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, for he hates them;* ver. 3. They speak flattery with their tongue, while at the same time their throats are open sepulchres, and they, it may be, attempt to waste, devour, and destroy. This character of the basest of men you read in the vth Psalm; and you find the same hateful practice among the Jews in their deepest degeneracy; *Jer.* ix. 5. 8. *They will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth. One speaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in heart he layeth wait for him.* But this which was so abominable in a Jew, surely a christian ought to stand at the greatest distance from it at all times.

As in discovery of our esteem, so in the profession of our love and good-will to our neighbour, we must observe truth. When your heart is not with your neighbour, be not profuse of the language of friendship. *Let love be without dissimulation;* Rom. xii. 9. Let love be sincere to your fellow-creatures, and love to your fellow-christians be upright and cordial. Let not that affection appear in a flourish of fine words, if it be not warm in your soul. This is the first character of truth, that our words agree with our hearts.

II. The next instance of the truth required in my text, is, when our deeds are conformable to our words: And this is called faithfulness, as the former is called veracity or sincerity. Faithfulness or truth, in this sense, has respect to our vows, our promises, our resolutions, or our threatenings.

1. Vows are properly made to God alone: And when they are made, if the matter of them be lawful, they ought to be performed. *When thou vowest a vow, defer not to pay it. Better it is thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow, and not pay;* Eccles. v. 4, 5.

2. Promises of things lawful made to our fellow-creatures, must also be fulfilled with religious care. As for things unlawful, they ought not to be promised. We bind ourselves to perform what we promise, and the law of God binds us as well as the laws of social life. In the xvth Psalm, ver. 4. it is another of the characters of him that shall inhabit the mountain of God, *that he sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not;* that is, he makes a promise to his neighbour, and though it be much to his own disadvantage, yet he doth not alter the word that is gone out of his lips, nor make a forfeiture of his truth by breach of his promise.

We should remember, that when we bind ourselves by a promise to give any good thing to another, or to do any thing for the benefit of another, the right of the thing promised passes over from us to the person to whom the promise is made, as much as if we had given him a legal bond, with all the formalities of signing and sealing; we have no power to recal, or reverse it without his leave. Always except the promise be made with a condition expressed, or necessarily and evidently implied; then indeed, if the condition fail, the promise is void. But the lips of a christian, when they have once uttered an absolute promise, have laid a bond upon his soul; and he dares not break the law of his God, though the law of man should not bind him.

3. The case of threatenings is somewhat different. A promise makes over the right of some benefit to another who may justly claim it; but a threatening only shews what punishment shall be due to another for such a particular fault or offence. If a superior propose and publish a law, and therein threaten an inferior with some penalty, the superior is supposed to be at liberty, whether he will execute the threatening of his own law, or no; for the criminal will not claim it. Thence arises the power of a superior to pardon a fault.

But if over and above the proposal and publication of this law, a father, for instance, or a master, does solemnly foretel or declare that he will certainly execute the penalty upon the child or servant offending; I think he ought generally to esteem himself bound to fulfil such a declaration or threatening, if it were made in a prudent and lawful manner; unless the repentance of the offender, or some other change of circumstances, give him a just reason to change his mind and alter his purpose.

And in the fourth place, the case is much the same when we make a solemn resolution, and publicly declare it, that we will do such or such a thing in time to come. If this resolution be solemn and public, and be in all respects lawful, it should generally be performed; unless some other circumstances arise, which we did not foresee, or which escaped our present notice when the resolution was made: Otherwise we justly expose ourselves to the censure of fickleness, inconstancy, rashness, and folly: And such a conduct seems to intrench upon truth. But this leads me to the third or last instance of truth.

III. Another part of the character of truth is, when our whole carriage is conformable to itself. When we are always of a piece with ourselves, and our conduct is still consistent with our own character and profession. This is called constancy.

Something of this might have been introduced indeed under the first or second particulars, when I shewed how our words should agree with our hearts, and our deeds with our words; for both these demand that our practice should correspond with our profession. But I choose to cast all that I have to say on this subject under the head of constancy to our professions and pretences, which implies a perpetual and persevering honesty of thoughts, words, and actions, and a regular consistency with ourselves. Now that I may throw this matter into the easiest method, I shall shew how this exercise of christian truth will appear in a good man at all times, in all conditions of life, in all places, and in all companies.

1. At all times a good man is the same: He ever maintains the same pious and religious design, and having set his face heavenward, he travels on in the sacred narrow path, and never wilfully turns aside to the right-hand or to the left: Or if at any time he

makes a false step, he recovers it again with humility and shame, and repentance, and his feet return to the ways of holiness.

Here let it be observed, that a good man may change his practices in some lesser points of christianity, and alter his principles too in doctrines of less importance, and yet he is not to be charged with criminal inconstancy or falsehood: For he never renounces all improvement of knowledge, but is ever ready to receive further light, and to retract his former errors and mistakes: And indeed this is one glorious evidence of his being a constant friend to truth. But being well established in the necessary and fundamental points of faith and practice, he walks on regularly in his christian course without wavering, or wandering into forbidden paths, ever pursuing his last great end: And this is a constant christian, though his sentiments, in the latter part of his life, may differ in several points from the thoughts of his youth.

When the eye of the world smiles upon his profession, and the sun shines bright upon his party, or when the clouds arise, and the sharp winds of persecution blow, he is still the same steady christian, composed, quiet, undisturbed; not doubtful what he should do, but aiming at heaven, he marches on homewards, with the regular discharge of all his duties to his God on high: Nor does he forget his obligations to his fellow-creatures on earth, though in twenty instances they may forget or refuse to fulfil their duty to him. His supreme obligations are to God his Maker, and to these he must be true and faithful.

How various were the trials that St. Paul met with from the Jews, and from the Greeks, from the Jewish christian, and the heathen converts! But how bright and blessed an uniformity ran like a golden thread through his whole life and ministry! Hear the holy man often in his writings declaring his own steadfast adherence to the gospel: Hear him appealing to his Ephesian disciples concerning his own conduct, and proving it to their consciences, that he had in some good measure acquitted himself according to this rule of christianity; *Acts* xx. 18. When the elders of Ephesus were come to him, *Ye know*, says he, *that from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons*, and that was by the space of three years, as in ver. 31. *serving the Lord with all humility of mind, with many tears and temptations that befel me:* And I was constantly testifying to the Jews and Greeks, *faith and repentance, and shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God to you, coveting no man's gold or apparel*, &c. I have shewed you now, that for these three years together I have maintained the same holy conduct, that so you might follow my example, that ye might always act agreeable to yourselves, and be constant to your own virtuous and holy character.

But what an inconstant christian is he who changes his principles and practices, being blown about with the wind of prevailing party, and the humour of the times! Who seems active in the cause of religion, when religion is the fashion of the age; but he grows ashamed of every part of godliness, when the times turn upon him! His religion dies, when piety is discouraged in the world, and a saint becomes a name of reproach! To-day for the God of Israel, and to-morrow among the worshippers of Baal! Now a zealot for pure doctrine and worship, anon so lukewarm and indifferent about every thing of religion, as though it had no place near his heart! Multiplying duties of godliness one week, and grossly negligent of all duty the next! To-day preaching and prac-

tising the rules of christianity, and to-morrow talking and living like a man of heathenism! True and constant to nothing, but to his own fickle temper and inconstancy!

Is it not a glorious character when we can say of a good man, that "All that have known him give him a good word; that those who have lived many years with him, and seen him in his unguarded hours, and in the undress of life, pronounce him the same man as he appears in the public world." They who have known him longest, admire him most, and love him best, and they bear a noble testimony to his virtues and his graces. His graces and his virtues advance with his years, they imitate the morning-sun, which keeps the same steady pace through the heavens, but rises hourly, and shines with a brighter lustre, and with warmer beams. *The path of the just, like the morning light, shines more and more unto the perfect day;* Prov. iv. 18.

But what a wretched satire it is upon any man to say, "If you see him for an hour his talents will surprise and please you; but if you have a year's acquaintance with him, his evil qualities are so many and so hateful, that all his charms vanish, and he sinks and loses all your esteem!" So a torch blazes high when it is first kindled, but the flame grows lower as it burns, till it expires in stench and smoke. Where such a censure is just, or such a simile well applied, the man is far from that fair character of truth and constancy which the gospel recommends.

2. A true christian is the same in all conditions of life. Let the favours or the frowns of men attend him, or the awful providence of God make a surprising change in his affairs, still he ceases not to look and live, to speak and act like a christian. Is it not a very honourable account that you have heard sometimes given of a person in the height of prosperity, and in the depth of afflictive circumstances, that he is still the same man? That he maintains his probity and his integrity, and every virtue, in the midst of all the revolutions of providence! Serene and cheerful, calm, peaceful and heavenly, holy and humble amidst them all! St. Paul was eminent for this grace. *I know*, saith he, *how to be abased and how to abound, to be full and to be hungry; I have learned to be content in whatsoever state I am*, and to appear a christian under every change of circumstances; *Philip.* iv. 11, 12.

The man of truth and constancy, when he is exalted and walks upon the mountains of prosperity and honour, is not vain and haughty in his treatment of inferiors, nor does he look askew upon his former friends, nor cast his eye down with contempt on his meaner brethren. When his mountain shakes and falls, he descends calmly into the valley; but he is not of a mean, abject, and desponding spirit: Ever mindful of his high birth as a christian, and of his heavenly home, he bears up with a sacred constancy of soul, with a generous contempt of this world, and all the vanishing honours and the uncertain possessions of it. His behaviour is ever true to his holy profession, and to his sublimest hope. Is not this a character which each of us wish our own? Is it not worthy of our aim and ambition, our daily pursuit and labour to obtain?

There are some christians that know not how to bear the smiles of providence; and some who are as much untaught to bear the frown of it: For their piety is ever changing, as their circumstances are.

The first sort are they who are never very serious and devout, but when they lie under the chastisements of God: They seem humble, penitent, and pious, when the rod of heaven is upon them; but when that is once removed, they forget their sorrows and their seriousness together. Such were the rebellious and inconstant Jews of old,

when the Lord slew them, they sought him early, and enquired after God; but they took every new occasion to murmur and rebel again: There was no truth in their religion; *their heart was not right with God*, nor *were they steadfast in his covenant*; Psalm lxxviii. 34. In *trouble they visited thee, O Lord, and poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them;* but *their goodness was like a morning cloud*, and *as the early dew, it vanished away;* Isaiah xxvi. 16. Hosea vi. 4.

There is another sort of men who behave well enough in matters of virtue and religion when they are in peaceful and easy circumstances; but if once they are smitten in their flesh, in their good name or their estate, or have any of the comforts of life embittered to them, they grow peevish and passionate, and nothing can please them; they vent their impatience on their friends, and throw their vexation of spirit all around them, as though they resolved to imitate that brutal character which the prophet mentions, *like a wild bull in a net*, struggling, and raving, and *full of fury* under *the rebuke of the Lord;* Isaiah li. 20. Surely both these qualities are very contrary to that serene and uniform practice of true godliness that becomes a saint.

3. In all places, as well as in all times and circumstances, the true christian appears the same, and is just to his own profession. Wheresoever he dwells, or sojourns, where he spends an hour or a year, he is constant to himself, and consistent with himself still. He ever maintains the same pious designs, and adorns and glorifies the doctrine of the gospel in all things. When at home and when abroad, he is the same person. When at church paying his honours and devotions to heaven; when in his own family among his children and servants, or when in his shop and in the affairs of life; when in the street or on the exchange conversing with the world, friends and strangers, known and unknown; when in his closet and secret chamber, still he is the same good man; still acting consistent with himself and his profession, still pursuing a regular steady course of piety, and his dying pillow confirms the sincerity and practice of his life. Religion is ever uppermost in his heart, and all his affairs and businesses in the world, are managed with regard to his last great end. Thus though his engagements and actions of life be very various daily, according to the various calls of duty; yet his design is ever the same, and the rule that governs all his practices is the word of God, the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

How far from the glory of this character were the false-hearted sons of Israel in Jeremiah's time! They were guilty of stealing and murdering in the streets, or by-ways, or private houses, *yet they came and stood before the Lord in the house which was called by his name;* Jer. vii. 3, 4, &c. There were also in our Saviour's days men of the same deceitful spirit, whom he frequently and sharply reproved under the odious name of hypocrites, who made long prayers in the temple, and in the corners of the streets: but devoured widows' houses, and neglected judgment, mercy, and faith; who made clean the outside of their cup, but filled it with all extortion, luxury, and excess. You read their infamous manners at large in the vi. and xxiii. chapters of Matthew.

They had no more truth in them than whited sepulchres or flowery graves, fair indeed and beautiful on the outside covering, but all within is death, and horror, and rottenness. O, how inconsistent were the two pieces of this character one with another! How far from that truth and uprightness, that sincerity and constancy, that the gospel requires, and so much approves of! What a most sharp and shameful reproach is it, and yet a

righteous one too, that is thrown on some persons! They are saints at church, and devils at home!

It is pity we must borrow a word from hell to describe any sort of men that dwell on earth: I would not willingly apply it to any particular person living: But in describing a general character of this kind, we can hardly paint it in colours frightful enough. In public they are all meekness and innocence, all demure, and abstemious, and heavenly, and they *transform themselves*, as their father does, *into angels of light;* 2 Cor. xi. 14. but follow them to their houses, and you see a surprising change: there luxury and riot, there fury and passion reign in every room, their dwelling is without God, without prayer, without piety or peace, and has more of hell than of heaven in it. *O my soul, come not into their secret*, to their family, *my honour, be not thou united!* for truth and goodness are far from them.

4. The true christian is the same in all companies: And though he does not think himself obliged to cast his pearls before swine, to give that which is holy to dogs, or to impose a discourse of religion upon those that hate it; yet he never forgets his religion in the worst of company, nor does he throw off the christian in the midst of heathens. The general course of his life shines in the beauty of holiness, and glorifies his God in an impious world. And there are seasons too, when he sees it necessary to rebuke public iniquity, and bear a testimony against a vicious age: *He has never any fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness*, but *rather he reproves them;* Eph. v. 11. Yet sometimes his prudence directs his christianity to lie concealed, but he never dares do any thing that contradicts it. It is like a garment that he ever wears about him, though he does not always wear it uppermost: He keeps it ever as his guard, though he does not always expose his glory.

What a scandal is it to any person who professes the name of Christ, that he can sometimes lay aside all his christianity, and bury it in an hour of riot! That he can drink till midnight when he gets among drunkards, and take his cup as merrily and as often as they! That he can relish a lewd or profane jest, and make one too, when he sits in the company of lewd or profane jesters! That he can lisp out an oath, and stammer at a curse, or perhaps he can swear roundly when he is in the midst of swearing wretches! And yet he can pray and talk devontly when he falls into religious company, and pretend to tremble at the profaneness of the age. What shameful hypocrisy and falsehood is this!

There are some persons who have appeared in the country to be professors of religion, and perhaps may have obtained a name of piety: but when they come up to the city among loose libertines, where their vices are better hid, they give themselves up to loose practices, and indulge a licentious month or two. They are pious amongst their acquaintance, and profane amongst strangers. They have not impudence enough to be constant in vice, nor have they grace enough to be true to virtue.

There are some that speak fair to the face of their neighbour, and spread their compliments abroad before him; but behind his back, in other company, they are as liberal of their reproaches, and can hardly endure a good thing to be said of him. Their behaviour has brought an infamous word into the English tongue; for they are justly called backbiters.

There are some children that pay the utmost deference to their parents in appearance and show, and will not dare any thing vicious while they are under their eye; but when

they are mingled with their vain young acquaintance, they run into many extravagances, and give a loose to the wild appetites of the flesh. But these are not the children of truth.

There are some servants who make their zeal and diligence appear while their master's eye is upon them; but they are mere eye-servants and false creatures; for when they are out of his sight, they can waste his substance among merry companions, and perhaps purloin and pilfer to gratify their own covetousness, or luxury: or at best they make no conscience of acting for their master's interest, when he is absent.

Thus different company hath a different influence on the thoughts, the words, and the works of men: And some persons will run into every vice and folly, rather than to oppose their company; they had rather sin against God, and be false to their profession, than venture to be, what they call, rude and uncivil to company. So tender are they of giving offence to men, and so careless of offending the great and dreadful God!

There are some of all ranks and orders, of all sexes and ages of mankind, that seem to be sober, but have nothing of this divine virtue of truth or constancy in them. They would neither swear, nor drink, nor game, nor speak a lewd or impious word, when they are in a sober family: But when at any time they happen to come into houses without godliness, they can follow the course of the family in all manner of iniquities, and grow false to all their former appearances of goodness.

I might multiply instances of this kind, to shew what falsehoods and sly deceits are practised amongst men who call themselves christians, and how inconsistent many of their actions are with their own professions and pretences: But this part of my discourse hath already exceeded its just bounds. Yet I think I ought not to leave it till I have answered one objection.

Objection. It may be said here, does not St. Paul, one of the truest christians, and the best of men, tell us, that when he was among the Jews, he became as a Jew, and appeared like one that was under the law: But when he was among the gentiles, who were without law, he appeared like a gentile too, for he was not willing to offend the one or the other; according to his own advice, *Give none offence neither to the Jews, neither to the gentiles, nor to the church of God;* 1 Cor. ix. 20. and chap. x. 32. To this I answer,

The blessed apostle, when he had none but Jews about him, practised so much of the Jewish law as was consistent with christianity: when he had none but gentiles with him, he declared his freedom and release from the bonds of the Jewish law, and neglected the Jewish ceremonies, for some parts of the Jewish law were lawful for a season, though they were so far abolished that they were not necessary for a christian. And the apostle managed this affair with holy prudence, and with a religious design to ingratiate himself and his ministry, as much as possible, both with the Jews and gentiles, for the salvation of both of them: For you find this was his great end, *I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some;* and *this I do for the gospel's sake;* ver. 22, 23.

Yet you may observe, that though he appeared free from the Jewish law when he was among the gentiles, yet he did not carry it like a lawless man, but confined all his practice within the bounds of his duty to God and his Saviour, *being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ;* ver. 21. So that neither one sort of company nor the other tempted him to neglect any duty, or to indulge any sin.

You may observe also upon another occasion, where Jews and gentiles were both present, when he thought a conformity to any of the Jewish customs might give greater offence to the gentile christians, and be likely to do more hurt than good, he withstood Peter to the face, for his sinful compliance with the uncharitable Jews: He reproved him for dissembling, and chid him because he *walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel*, and would not *give place to him by subjection; no, not for an hour;* Gal. ii. 5, 11, 14, &c.

There are some seasons therefore when we may indulge an innocent compliance with our company in things lawful, in order to do credit to the gospel of Christ, and make our profession appear lovely and honourable in the eyes of all: But there are other seasons when circumstances are so placed, that we may not indulge the same compliances, lest our liberty be construed to an evil purpose, and we bring more scandal than honour to our profession by it.

I grant there are some difficulties attending particular cases in the christian life, and it is hard to know sometimes how far we may go. It is no easy matter to tread in the apostle's steps, to become all things to all men, and yet be true to Christ. In the general, let this be our great rule, to act always with honest zeal for the glory of God, and see that we please him in the first place: and then as *far as possible to please all men, not seeking our own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved;* 1 Cor. x. 31, 32, 33. And if while we endeavour to be true to God, we should happen to be less complaisant to men, we shall certainly find favour at the throne of God, and then we ought not to be over-solicitous whether men be pleased, or no.

Thus I have finished the first general head, which was to shew the extent and latitude of this virtue, or what is included in the nature of this truth, which the apostle recommends to christians. It contains in it veracity or sincerity, faithfulness and constancy: And a lovely character it is indeed, when it shines in its full glory.

But it is time now to enquire, which of us can say, "This character belongs to me? Am I this true, this sincere, this faithful, this constant christian? Am I always careful that my words are conformable to my heart, and express the honest sense of my soul? Do I speak nothing but what I believe to be true, and set a continual guard upon the door of my lips, lest they utter deceit and falsehood? Do I neither flatter my neighbour, nor spread a false report of him? Am I watchful to make no promises, but what I mean sincerely to fulfil? And am I as careful to perform my vows and all my engagements? Am I sincere in the profession of godliness, and constant in my practice of it at all times and circumstances, in all places and companies whatsoever?"

Let us ask our hearts again, "While we have heard this discourse, how many of us have sat here judging our neighbours, and not ourselves? Have we been distributing abroad the shameful characters of insincerity, falsehood, unfaithfulness, and inconstancy, among our acquaintance? Or have we applied the words as a test to our own souls, as a trial of our christianity? Have we taken a secret and malicious pleasure in fixing these scandals upon others? Or have we begged of God to fix the conviction upon ourselves if we are guilty? And which of us can stand up and say in the face of heaven, We are innocent, entirely innocent of all these charges?" O may the blessed Spirit, the Convincer and the Sanctifier, shew each of us our own concern in this sermon, awaken each of us to a sense of our own iniquities, and by his almighty grace work in us repentance, and restore us to truth and holiness!

SERMON XXI.

CHRISTIAN MORALITY, viz. TRUTH, SINCERITY, &c.

PHILIP. iv. 8.

WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE TRUE,—THINK ON THESE THINGS.

TRUTH is a name of wide extent. It includes in it the blessings of the head and the heart. Happy the man whose head is furnished with a large knowledge of divine and human truth, and so far delivered from mistakes and errors, as to lay a foundation for wisdom and holiness! But all the furniture of the head is not sufficient to make us truly wise and holy, without the honesty and integrity of the heart. Truth demands a room and place there also: And this is the truth which my text recommends.

The first thing I proposed, was to shew the latitude and extent of this duty—and I have described it as consisting in these three things; 1. Veracity, which is, when our words are conformable to the sentiments of our mind. 2. Faithfulness, when our actions agree with our words. 3. Constancy, and that is when our practices are consistent with our pious principles, and the whole course of our life is of a piece, governed by the same rules and dictates of morality and religion. Where these are wanting, that person is false, faithless, fickle, and inconstant, and acts neither agreeable to his nature as a man, nor to his character as a christian.

The second thing I designed to shew, was that the light of nature dictates and requires the practice of this virtue: And it will appear, if we consider our relation either to God or man.

I. If we consider our natural relation to God, both as our Creator or Father, and as our Lord or Governor.

Consider him as our Father, the Author of our being. Truth and faithfulness are the attributes of his nature, and the necessary characters of his conduct toward his creatures; and many of the heathens could tell us, that a likeness to God the Father of our spirits, in such moral perfections of his nature, is the duty and glory of mankind. We are his offspring, saith Aratus, a heathen poet; *Acts* xvii. 28. and children should be like their divine Parent.

The light of nature tells us, that he is not only our Creator, and our Father in this sense, but he is our Lord and Governor also. And he has knowledge, and he has power to answer and fulfil this high character and station. The great God who looks into our hearts, who sees our souls through and through, he knows what our inward sentiments are while the falsehood is on our lips; he remembers what our engagements and contracts are while we renounce and break them; he hates deceit, lying, and falsehood; and all the civilized nations have ever supposed that he will avenge it with peculiar judgments.

It is upon this supposition of an all-knowing and avenging Power, that oaths are administered in all countries which are reformed from utter barbarity. An oath is appointed to be the confirmation of truth in what we say or do. Therein God himself, with all his knowledge, his power and his terrors, is called upon to bear witness to what we speak, and to be an avenger of perjury and falsehood. Surely we might venture to say, that a day will come when the great and holy God will shew himself terrible to liars and deceivers, if we had nothing but the light of nature to tell us so.

II. If we consider our relation to mankind, truth will appear to be a necessary duty. Man is a sociable creature, he is made to love society; but no society can be maintained without truth: All falsehood therefore is inconsistent with the social nature of mankind, and consequently it becomes contrary to the law and light of nature. Without truth we should all become deceivers to one another, every man a liar to his neighbour. No contracts would be of any force; no commerce could be maintained; none of us would be able to trust another, nor could we live safe by those that dwell nearest to us.

He that indulges himself in lying, takes away his own credit, and gives sufficient occasion for his neighbour not to believe him, even when he happens to speak the truth; for a man that will lie and deceive sometimes, how can we tell that he is not dealing deceitfully with us, even when he professes to be most faithful and true? And children should take notice of this, that if once they indulge the sin of lying, there is no body will ever believe what they say.

A liar is such an abandoned character amongst mankind, that though there are too many who deserve the name, yet every one is ashamed of it. It is esteemed a reproach of so heinous and hateful a nature for a man to be called a liar, that sometimes the life and blood of the slanderer has paid for it. The very nature of man resents it highly, for it implies in it, that a man guilty of this vice deserves to be cut off from all society with mankind, and to be thrust out of cities and families like a beast of the earth.

The same thing may be said of an unfaithful man, a man who makes promises, contracts, and agreements, and takes no care to perform them. All commerce and traffic is confounded, and the laws of it dissolved by a person of this shameful conduct. He that loses his credit and honour by this sort of falsehood, cuts himself off from many of the blessings of civil society, and stands as it were excommunicated from the friendship, the company, and commerce of his neighbours among whom he dwells. His character becomes hateful among men, and his name is a word of scandal and infamy. But where a man is true to his word, and punctual in all his correspondences, how fair is his reputation! How honourable is his name! And he stands entitled to all the blessings of the society where he resides.

I might borrow arguments also from the light of nature, to shew what an excellent virtue is that of constancy; how useful in the whole course of life, how honourable a name does it gain a man in the world! With what a happy regularity his affairs proceed both in his household and in his shop or business of life! He maintains a sacred and steady peace of mind, and all men bless him: But the character of a fickle, wavering, inconstant man, is always mean and contemptible: he is compared to a weather-cock that is blown about by every wind; and his name is thus exalted or stuck on high, there to become a more public mark of jest and ridicule.

The third thing I proposed, is to consider what are those additional arguments that might be drawn from the gospel for the practice of this truth and sincerity, this faithfulness and constancy: For the gospel doth not only confirm all the duties of morality that the light of nature dictates, and establish all the reasons of them that the light of nature more feebly proposes, but it adds also many arguments and motives to enforce the same virtuous practices, which the mere light of nature knows nothing of; and I shall represent all these advantages of the gospel here. But I will not overload your memory with particulars, and therefore I shall speak them more generally, and heap them together; and may your souls and mine feel the united force of them!

It is a gospel of truth we profess, even the eternal truth of God revealed to men concerning our salvation and his glory. There are a multitude of scriptures where the gospel itself is called the truth, and the word of truth; and it is a most inconsistent thing for the professors of this gospel to be guilty of falsehood.

God the Father is the God of truth; and never did he give so glorious a demonstration of the sincerity of his love, of the faithfulness of his promises, and of the constancy of his compassionate design to man, as in sending his own Son into the world, according to his ancient prophecies of a thousand years, and bestowing upon us Jesus the Saviour.

Jesus Christ, by whose name we are called, *he is the true and faithful witness;* Rev. iii. 14. *Truth, and grace,* and peace *came by him;* John i. 17. He is called the truth; *John* xiv. 6. He came down to *bring life and immortality to light by his gospel;* he came to tell us, and he well knew, that in *his Father's house were many mansions; and if it were not so, says he, I would have told you:* But it is not my business to be a deceiver to men: Therefore all the life, light, and immortality that I have discovered to you in my preaching, it is all sincere, it is all real. When you enter into the other world, trusting my promises, you will find all my words fulfilled. I would not have raised your expectations, if it had been otherwise.

Again, *the Holy Spirit is a Spirit of truth;* it is he that *guides us into all truth;* John xvi. 13. And the name of this Father, and this Son, and this Holy Spirit, is called upon us in our first admission to christianity: So that we wear the name of the God of truth upon us, and shall we indulge temptations to falsehood? Shall we practise deceit, who profess a gospel of such truth, and upon whom the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the name of the God of truth is pronounced in baptism?

God is sincere in his revelations of grace, and discoveries of his pardoning mercy; for he sent his own Son to die for us, and this is a proof of his sincerity in his designs of love. Let us then be sincere in love to our God, to our fellow creatures, and fellow-christians. Jesus Christ is sincere in the profession of his love, and he hath given us an infallible pledge of it, for he hath given his life for us. *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends;* John xv. 13. But he hath laid down his life for enemies, and therefore he hath magnified his love, and divinely demonstrated it to be sincere and true, beyond all possibility of jealousies and exceptions.

God is faithful to all the promises of his gospel; *all his ways are mercy and truth to his people: He is a God keeping covenant through all generations.* This is the illustrious title that he assumes to himself, and glories in: And this is the name by which the ancient saints have delighted to make their addresses to him. These heavens shall be

dissolved and perish in the flame, and this earth become a smoking cinder; *heaven and earth shall pass away, but the word of the Lord and his truth abide for ever; not one jot or tittle of them shall perish, but all shall be fulfilled.*

By two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie; that is, his oath and his promise, he hath established his covenant of grace, *that the heirs of salvation might have strong consolation;* Heb. vi. 18. Hereby it comes to pass that we have a sure hope of eternal life; for *God that cannot lie hath promised it to us in Christ Jesus before the world began;* Tit. i. 2. and 2 Tim. i. 9. And though it was so long ago since the first promise was made, the first promise made to Christ before the foundations of the world, and the first promise made to fallen Adam a little after the foundations of the world were laid; yet our God hath not forgotten his promises and his covenant; he remains still faithful to fulfil every word of grace *that is gone out of his lips;* Psal. lxxxix. 33, 34. And should not this oblige us to like faithfulness to our fellow.creatures, since God, who is so infinitely our superior, is pleased thus to bind himself by promises, and thus to fulfil them?

The constancy and immutability of God in his designs of mercy to sinners, should influence us to the practice of the same constancy of spirit in our professions of his gospel. God acts always like himself, conformable to the glory, and holiness, and dignity of his nature, so should we, who are the sons and daughters of the most high and holy God. He is uniform in his counsels and methods of grace and peace, he is unchangeable in his love, and always the same: *And Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;* constant to himself, and consistent with himself in all the purposes of his mercy, and in all the prosecutions of those divine and eternal purposes in heaven and on earth. No alteration of circumstances, no change of place, from a cross on earth to a throne in heaven, can change his compassion and love to his saints. And shall we suffer our petty changes here on earth, from a higher to a lower part of a little mole-hill, to make such a shameful alteration in our conduct to our friends, as too often endangers our truth, and discovers our inconstancy?

Let us consider that by our profession of christianity we renounce deceit and falsehood, and all the hidden things of darkness: We are *children of the light,* then let us *walk in the light, and do the truth,* and let our *deeds be made manifest, that they are wrought in God;* that is, in the faith and fear of God; *John* iii. 21. Why should a christian be a deceiver, when he bears the name of Christ the faithful and true? How inconsistent a character is it for a christian to be a liar! For a christian to be false, and violate and break his word! How dishonourable is it to the holy name we bear!

Let the children of Satan, who is a liar from the beginning, delight themselves in falsehoods, and sport themselves in their own deceivings: Let those who renounce all hope in the promises of God, imitate the devil, who is the father of lies: But let us who trust in the God of truth, who believe in Jesus the Saviour, and make his truth our hope, let us imitate our heavenly Father and our blessed Lord: Let us speak the truth and practise it. It was by a lie of the devil that our first parents were deceived and ruined: All our sin and misery sprung from that falsehood, *Ye shall not surely die.* And it is by our faith in the truth and promise of God that we hope for salvation. While we therefore remember either the spring of our ruin, or the means of our recovery, we should love the truth, and hate lying.

But there are motives of terror, as well as arguments of grace and love, that should

ever influence us to sincerity and truth. We should remember that Christ our Lord has *eyes like a flame of fire, that he searches the hearts and the reins, and will render to every one according to their works;* Rev. ii. 23. We should remember the dreadful threatenings that Christ the faithful and true Witness, Christ the Lord and Judge of all men, hath denounced against hypocrites. You scarce find him preaching a sermon of any length, but he has one or more woes in it ready for those that practise hypocrisy.

There is no sort of sinners that he treats with such infamous names, and such killing reproaches as he does the hypocrite. They resemble the old serpent, the devil, in subtilty and falsehood, and therefore the language of Christ to them runs in this manner; Ye Jews, who are false to the inward conviction of your own consciences, *ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do: He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it;* John viii. 44. It is as if our Lord had said, "The first lie that ever was made, was made by the devil; and by his telling a lie, and our mother Eve's believing it, he murdered mankind in Adam their head. And yet you false Jews would imitate him, and make him your father." And again, *Woe unto you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites—ye serpents, ye generation of vipers,* sons of the old serpent, *how can ye escape the damnation of hell;* Matt. xxiii. 29, 33. Your eternal punishment is most just and unavoidable.

In another of his discourses he makes the punishment of hypocrites to be, as it were, the pattern of the punishment of the worst of wickedness. The *servant* who is intrusted with the household of his Lord, that shall *beat his fellows*, and *shall eat and drink with the drunken, his Lord shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth;* Matt. xxiv. 51. And when you read the black catalogue of sinners, who are doomed to everlasting destruction, *Rev.* xxi. 8. the name of liars is put in with a peculiar remark, *the unbelievers, the murderers, the whoremongers, the sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.* As if he had said, Whosoever escapes hell, no liar shall escape it, and it is repeated again in the next chapter, *Without the gates* of heaven *are dogs and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie;* Rev. xxii. 15.

Whensoever therefore we find a temptation to falsehood, let us set ourselves under the immediate eye of God our Judge, God *who shall bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and shall judge the secrets of every heart one day by Jesus Christ our Lord;* 1 Cor. iv. 5. Rom. ii. 16. If we did but always place ourselves as in the sight of the great and dreadful God, whose eye beholds every falsehood we practise, and all the hidden hypocrisy, the lurking deceit of the soul, whose ear attends to every word of falsehood we speak, and records it all in his book against that great and terrible day of account; surely we should find a more effectual influence of it upon our spirits, to guard us from such words and actions as are inconsistent with the sincerity of a christian.

And let our hearts be melted into repentance for our past iniquities of this kind, and moulded into the love of truth by a delightful meditation of the faithfulness of our Lord Jesus Christ to us, in performing his kind and dreadful undertaking to suffer for our sins. Let us dwell upon the thoughts of his faithfulness to all his promises, and think thus with ourselves, that he has engaged us to truth of every kind by the strongest

bonds of duty and love: And if we are false and unfaithful to him in this world, how justly may he cut us off from all our glorious hopes and expectations in the world which is to come.

But this leads me to the fourth general head that I proposed; which was to lay down some directions how christians may be preserved in the ways of truth, how they may secure and maintain this blessed character of integrity and uprightness which I have described. And I think this may be better performed by distinguishing truth, or integrity, into those three distinct parts, under which I treated of it before, namely, veracity, faithfulness, and constancy, and by giving some rules for the preservation of each.

The rules to preserve veracity, or to keep our words conformable to our hearts, are such as these:

I. Be persuaded in your own minds, that no circumstances whatsoever can make a lie lawful. Though when a question is asked, there are many cases wherein it may be lawful to turn the discourse aside, to wave a direct answer, to be entirely silent; or in some circumstances it may be both lawful, prudent, and proper, to conceal a part of the truth, as I hinted in the former sermon; yet in my opinion it is neither prudent, proper, nor lawful, to speak a falsehood to deceive my neighbour. The whole truth may not always be necessary to be spoken to men; but such falsehood is always a sin in the sight of God. All lying is utterly forbidden; and the true meaning of a lie is, when we speak that which we believe to be false, with a design to deceive the person to whom we speak.

Here may arise two questions:

1. If I have a good and valuable end in speaking, and my design is to serve the glory of God, or the good of my neighbour, may I not then use the art of lying, or speak a known falsehood without sin?

2. Surely there are some sort of persons who have no right to truth, such as children, common liars, knaves or cheats; may we not therefore deceive them by direct falsehoods, either for their good, or for our own?

These are enquiries of very great importance to the honour of truth, to the satisfaction of conscience, and to the welfare of mankind: And it is my present opinion (and I think there is good reason for it) that none of these cases can make an express and deceitful falsehood to be lawful, or change the nature of a lie, and make it innocent; but to debate these two cases as largely as they deserve, would too much incumber the present discourse; I leave them therefore to be read with an honest and serious mind, as an appendix to these sermons of truth, and so proceed to the next direction, how to preserve our veracity.

II. The second rule to preserve veracity is this; accustom yourselves to a sober, modest way of speaking, and avoid all those methods of speech that border upon falsehood. I shall mention a few of them, to give sufficient notice of what I mean.

Some persons affect to be certain of every thing they speak, and pronounce all that they say with the highest assurance. If they are relating matters of fact, which they only learn by report, they tell you every circumstance without the least hesitation, and endeavour even in a dubious matter to make the hearer believe it with the highest confidence: They are never in the wrong, never doubtful whether they are in the right or no. If they are declaring their own sentiments of the most difficult subject, it is always as

clear to them as the light, they are always as positive as if it were divinely revealed, and written in the most express words of scripture.

Now such sort of speakers will often find they have been mistaken; and if they have modesty enough to retract their words, it is well: but for the most part they refuse conviction, and often persist to maintain their own error, even almost against their own consciences. In short, it appears to me, that a man who dares frequently to assert doubtful matters with the most positive air of assurance, has not so much tenderness about his heart, and such a religious fear of lying, as a good christian ought to have.

There are others again that affect to tell you nothing that is common, but would always surprize the company with strange things and prodigies, and all this out of the pride of their hearts, and an ambition to have their own stories applauded and admired by all that hear them. This sort of affectation oftentimes betrays a person into falsehood, and secretly and insensibly allures him to say things that are neither credible nor true. Sailors and travellers should set a special guard upon themselves in this respect.

There are a third sort of talkers, that when they discourse of common things, are ever expressing them in exalted and superlative language. If they speak of any thing small, it is prodigiously small; if they speak of any thing great, it is incomparably great. If they name a man of wisdom, he is the wisest man in the world; or a woman of piety, she is the only saint in the nation. An imprudent man with them is the greatest fool in nature; and a little disappointing accident in life, is an intolerable vexation. If they happen to hear a good sermon, the preacher was inspired, not an angel could exceed him: If it was a mean discourse, the wretch had not a grain of sense or learning. Every opinion they hold is divine and fundamental: All their own sentiments, even in lesser matters, are the very sense of Christ and his apostles, and all that oppose them are guilty of heresy or nonsense. Now persons who have accustomed their tongues to this language in common discourse, seem to want that due caution which the strict rules of godliness may seem to require, and make a little too free with truth. Either their thoughts are very injudicious, if they can believe what they say; or if they do not believe it, they should make their words agree better with their thoughts.

But besides the approaches to falsehood in this manner of conversation, there is something in it that is very vain, and almost ridiculous. Methinks such an extravagant talker is something like a man that walks upon stilts through the open street, or like one who wears a coat much longer than his neighbours; and how tall soever they may think themselves, the world will be ready to call one of them a child, and the other an idiot.

Objection. But are there not a multitude of such expressions in scripture in the books of Job, and the Psalms, and the Prophets, wherein even the more plain or common occurrences of life are dressed up in very magnificent language, and in expressions that far exceed the truth of things? Does not David, in his elegy upon Saul and Jonathan, say, *they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions?* 2 Sam. i. 23. And even in St. John's history of the life and death of Christ, does he not suppose, *that if all things which Jesus did were written, even the world itself could not contain the books?* John xxi. 25.

Answer. It is the natural language of poetry and prophecy, and the custom of the eastern nations, to express things in a lofty and sublime manner; so that there is no danger of being deceived by that language, when a prophet or a poet indulges such figures of speech. Now the books of Job and Psalms, and David's elegy, are so many

Hebrew poems. The business of oratory is a-kin to verse, and sometimes requires a figurative style. But in familiar language and common discourse, it is not the custom of mankind to use such extravagance of expression: The hearer is many times ready to be led into a mistake thereby, because he supposes the speaker to mean plainly what he says. And I would not willingly indulge a habit of expressing my thoughts in such a manner in common conversation, as should deceive my hearers, to humour a silly affectation.

As for the figure which St. John uses to represent the variety of useful things which were said and done by our Saviour, it is such as can lead no man into a mistake, for none can believe it to be understood in a literal sense. Besides, if one would indulge the most superlative expressions and boldest figures that human language can furnish one with, to set out the honours of any person on earth, there can be no such proper or deserving subject as Jesus Christ our Lord.

III. The third rule to preserve veracity is this, practise nothing which you are ashamed of. Do nothing that you need be afraid of the ear of the world: Walk carefully in the ways of virtue and duty: Fulfil your obligations to God and man to the utmost of your power: Venture upon no practice that needs a cover, a disguise, or an excuse; and then you will not be so often under the temptation of lying.

Let children remember this, and have a care of disobeying God, or their parents, even when they are alone; lest they be tempted to excuse their faults by lying, which indeed does but enlarge and double them, rather than diminish and excuse them. Let servants take notice of this, and pay all due honour and faithful obedience to their masters and governors; or else the devil, and their own corrupt hearts, will frequently join together, and help them to a lie for the cover of their guilt. Let every one that hears this discourse watch over all their actions, and confine them within the rules of religion; otherwise their practice, which will not bear the light, will put them under a temptation to hide it behind a refuge of lies.

And under this head I might particularly give this advice. Do not affect a cunning way of life. Do not aim at the character of a subtle and crafty man. Be not fond of being let into secrets, nor of engaging in intrigues of any sort. There are some tempers of mankind that are naturally addicted to craft, and are ever seeking to outwit their neighbours: they seldom live upon the square, or walk onward in an open path; but are still doubling, and turning, and traversing their course. They take a special pleasure in managing all their affairs with art and subtilty, and call it necessary prudence. But if you would shew yourselves tender of the truth, and preserve it, let your course of life be bold, and free, and open. There is much prudence to be used in our daily conduct, without this crafty humour. The integrity of a man will preserve him, and keep his tongue from falsehood, whereas a man who is much engaged in crafty designs, will now and then be tempted to intrench upon truth, and come near the brink of lying, to carry on and cover all his secret purposes.

Methinks I could pity rather than envy the high station of courtiers. How often they are constrained to put on disguise, to colour or to conceal their real designs! How near they walk to the borders of falsehood, and tread hourly upon the very edge of a lie! David, the man after God's own heart, while he kept his father's sheep, was more secure from this temptation; but when he became a courtier and a king, he was often exposed, and therefore he begs earnestly, that God would *remove from him the way of lying;*

Psalm cxix. 29. He had felt the mischievous influence of this snare, and dreaded the pernicious power of it. To be ever practising the politician at home or abroad, is a constant snare to sincerity; and to live as a spy in a foreign court, may be a post of service to our own nation; but it is exceeding dangerous to virtue and truth.

IV. Have a care of indulging any violent passion, for that will tempt the tongue to fly out into extravagance of expression, and out-run the settled judgment of the mind. Whether it be grief or impatience, or anger and resentment, it will engage the soul to form ideas far above and beyond the truth of things, and often arm the tongue with unruly expressions, even beyond the sentiments of the heart. Strife and contention, and noisy quarrels, are very dangerous enemies to truth.

And upon this account, above all things, I would warn young christians to avoid the excessive zeal of a party-spirit in the lesser differences of religion. There has been often a great deal of darkness, and fire, of rage, and deceit, and falsehood in such sort of quarrels as these. Men of natural warmth, animated by an honest zeal for God and religion, taking it into their head, that every doctrine besides their own is damnable heresy, and all forms of worship different from their own, are superstitious or schismatical, and abominable in the sight of God; they have, under the influence of these principles, kindled their passions to a flame: and to secure the reputation of their own party, or vindicate all their principles and practices, they have made shameful inroads upon truth, even in relating matters of fact: and, as Dr. Tillotson well expresses it, that the zealots of all parties have got a scurvy trick of lying for the truth; though he confesses he has never observed any that would be so very fond of a false report, or hug and caress a lie as the papists have done. And I wish no protestant had ever followed their example.

I should proceed now to lay down rules how persons may best preserve their faithfulness to vows or engagements of any kind. But this must be reserved to the next discourse.

HYMN FOR SERMONS XX. AND XXI.

CHRISTIAN MORALITY, viz. TRUTH, SINCERITY, &c.

I.

LET those who bear the christian name
Their holy vows fulfil:
The saints, the followers of the Lamb,
Are men of honour still.

II.

True to the solemn oaths they take,
Though to their hurt they swear;
Constant and just to all they speak,
For God and angels hear.

III.

Still with their lips their hearts agree,
Nor flattering words devise;
They know the God of truth can see
Through every false disguise.

IV.

They hate th' appearance of a lie,
In all the shapes it wears;
Firm to the truth; and when they die,
Eternal life is theirs.

V.

Lo! from afar the Lord descends,
And brings the judgment down;
He bids his saints, his faithful friends,
Rise and possess their crown.

VI.

While Satan trembles at the sight,
And devils wish to die,
Where will the faithless hypocrite,
And guilty liar fly?

SERMON XXII.

CHRISTIAN MORALITY, viz. TRUTH, SINCERITY, &c.

PHILIP. iv. 8.

WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE TRUE,—THINK ON THESE THINGS.

WHEN we are ever so well informed in the nature of our duty, we still want arguments to make our consciences feel the obligation. Flesh and blood are frail and sinful; grace is feeble and imperfect in the present state; temptations surround us in this lower world, and are ever ready to allure or affright us from the paths of holiness: we have need therefore of powerful motives to enforce every duty upon our practice.

In the first discourse on this subject, we have heard the nature and extent of that truth or sincerity which the gospel requires. In the second, we have considered what obligations are discovered by the light of nature to be faithful, upright, and constant in our words and our ways; and what additional motives the religion of Christ has furnished us with, to practise the same virtues; and may the good Spirit of God make our souls feel the power of them! But nature is dark, as well as feeble. We are unskilful in the matters of holiness, and know not how to secure our virtue, and to guard ourselves from temptation to the contrary vice, unless we are informed by particular directions. I begun this work at the end of the last discourse. And as truth was divided into three parts, *viz.* veracity, faithfulness, and constancy; so I proposed to give special rules for the preservation of each of them.

The directions to preserve our veracity, were these:

1. Be well persuaded in your minds, that a known and wilful lie is utterly unlawful: Let your heart be established in this doctrine; for a slight conviction may be easily overcome by some advantageous circumstances, and the temptation will soon prevail.

2. Be sober, modest, and cautious in the manner of your speech, and do not allow yourself in those ways of expression which border upon lying; for if you often accustom your tongue to venture near a lie, you will be in danger sometimes of falling into it.

3. Take care to do nothing that you need to be ashamed of, that so you may not be under the temptation of a lie to cover or excuse it.

4. Watch against the violence of any passion; for this will sorely endanger the veracity of your lips. Passion will carry your judgment beyond the truth of things, and then it will soon awaken your tongue to an extravagance of language, even beyond the present irregular judgment of the mind.

I persuaded you there to beware of blind and fiery zeal, and more especially in matters of small importance, lest you should be tempted to tell lies for a pretended defence of the truth. The pious frauds, as they are called, or the religious cheats that have been practised in christendom in all ages, have brought much dishonour to the gospel of Christ.

The second part of truth is faithfulness to our vows, promises, and solemn resolutions. This is a conformity of our deeds to our words, as the former was a conformity of our words to our thoughts. And I come now to lay down some rules how we may secure our faithfulness, and maintain our conscience and conversation free from guilt or blame in this respect also.

I. Be very cautious in all the promises, vows, and obligations, under which you lay yourself. Use a pious prudence in this matter, and it will be more easy to you to perform them. Do not multiply needless bonds upon your soul. The more care you take before you utter any thing with your lips, you will be more secure of fulfilling what your lips pronounce.

In the case of vows, there is no inconvenience of solemn engagements to God to do what his law hath made your duty before. And this was the custom of the primitive christians, as Pliny, a heathen, acquaints us, that they made vows, and swore in their secret meetings, not to commit murder, or theft, or adultery, or indulge vicious courses. It is good to remind ourselves of what God requires, and establish all our obligations to the general practice of holiness.

But you had need be well advised before you make vows in matters that are indifferent; for many times this has exposed persons to greater snares and difficulties. They have hoped to restrain the violence of natural appetites by means of their own devising; and thus they have been tempted to be unfaithful to God himself. The word of God gives us this advice; Eccles. v. 5, 6. *Better it is that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin, neither say thou before the angel, it was an error. Wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the works of thine own hands?* That is, "Do not hastily engage thyself in vows, such as the weakness of flesh and blood will not suffer thee to perform: Nor think of being absolved from thy own obligations in the presence of God, and his holy angels, by foolish excuses, and saying, It was a mistake; lest God, being angry and offended at thy broken vows, should bring a curse upon thee and thy affairs." There is most abundant experience of the folly and danger of needless vows in the church of Rome.

In the case of promises made to others, and public solemn resolutions, be not too frequent in making of them. See that the reason of things, the providence of God, and the circumstances of life, seem to call you to it before you engage, that so you may better maintain your faithfulness, and turn your words into deeds. Why should you make chains to bind yourself, without necessity or reason? Why should you promise to do this, or to go thither, in a thoughtless or trifling way, and let your tongue put needless bonds and fetters on your hands and feet for time to come? *My son, if thou art surety for a stranger*, or if thou make a bargain without discretion, or multiply promises without prudence, *thou art snared with the words of thy mouth.*

There are some persons who are very free of their promises upon all occasions, and often indulge this manner of speaking, "I am resolved to do such a thing to-day, or I will certainly go to such a place to-morrow," *&c.* Whereas sometimes they find the thing impracticable, sometimes it is inconsistent with their other duties of life, sometimes it lays them under great difficulties and inconveniences to fulfil such appointments, and often they forget them too, and so disappoint their friends.

Before you tie yourselves by your solemn resolves and engagements, ask your hearts,

Is it possible to be done, Is it lawful? Is it convenient? Is it proper? Is it consistent with other promises? Is the thing which I would promise due to my neighbour upon principles of honour, virtue, gratitude, religion? Is it necessary at all, and is it necessary at this time? Methinks I would have no promise made, but what should be kept; and therefore I would set all these guards around my lips. Experience of human affairs will teach us the use of these prudential rules, if we cannot learn them without it. A watchful caution in all such sort of language, as lays us under any engagements to future practices, is of necessary use to secure our faithfulness, and to maintain our truth with honour.

Besides, I might add also, that we should bring in something of God and piety into the common engagements of life; and this would preserve a greater guard upon our tongues. *Go to now, ye that say, to-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain; whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow:—for that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that;* James iv. 13, &c.

If therefore we would secure our faithfulness as well as our veracity, it is necessary to learn a modest and cautious way of speaking, and accustom our tongues to practise it. When we are relating any thing past or present, the words, I think, I suppose, it is my opinion, are very proper where the case has any thing doubtful in it: So when we engage ourselves to do any thing for time to come, I intend, I design, I hope, I will endeavour, are more cautious methods of speech, and very proper upon most occasions of life, except where the circumstances require a more express promise, whereby we bind all our faithfulness to the performance.

II. I would add another rule in the case of vows and promises, which cannot but have some force towards the preservation of truth. Think solemnly with yourself, how miserable and abandoned a creature you must be, if neither God nor man should fulfil any of their promises or engagements to you, and thereby you should awaken your soul and all your powers to perform your obligations to them. What if your governors should break their engagements to defend and protect you? What if your parents and your friends should refuse to help and assist, to feed, or clothe, or comfort you? What if your debtors should refuse to pay what they owe you? and your servants deny you their obedience and help in a most necessary hour? What if your neighbours should disappoint you in all the agreements and promises they make? What if the great and blessed God should seize all your forfeited mercies, because of your unfaithfulness to him, and perform none of the promises of his word which regard this life, or the life to come? What a load of calamities would at once come upon you, and overwhelm you in soul and body! You would fall under universal distress and wretchedness in this world, and have no hope for eternity; and yet if you are careless to fulfil your covenants, or wilfully break your engagements, why should you expect that God should fulfil any on his side? Or why should his kind providence incline any creature to fulfil any on their side?

"O blessed and holy God, how false have we been to thee! How fickle! How unfaithful! How often have we broken the solemn engagements under which we have laid ourselves to thy majesty! Our comforts are all forfeited into thy hands, and yet we have food and clothing given us; the mercies of the night and the day are continued to us; thy compassions are renewed every morning, and in the evening thy faithfulness is glorified. We are ready to charge our fellow-creatures with unfaithfulness, and reproach

their breach of promise, when we ourselves perhaps have been the unfaithful dealers, and have broken all those engagements and bonds of kindness or duty which are the foundation of their promises. We seldom or never think of our own unfaithfulness to them or to thee, but delight ourselves in accusations, while thou delightest in forgiveness. O how often hast thou pardoned our broken vows, and hast been slow to anger! But we, though we are wretchedly unfaithful ourselves, yet are slow and backward to forgive. We have been guilty of many failures in thy covenant, and our everlasting hopes had been utterly lost, if thy covenant had not stood firmer on thy side than it has on ours. Blessed be the name of Jesus, our glorious Surety, our Advocate at thy right hand, to whom thy promises were first given! He has fulfilled all his sacred engagements: Thy faithfulness to him can never fail; in him are all our hopes established; by his grace we are kept from an utter renouncing of thy covenant, though we have so often wretchedly failed in the performance of it. Glory, honour, and praise be given to a faithful God, to a kind and faithful Mediator!"

I come now to propose a rule or two for the preservation of our constancy, which is the third part of truth or integrity; and to give some directions how we may keep the whole course of our life consistent with itself, and agreeable to our profession.

I. Fix your great and general end, your chief and everlasting design, and keep it ever in your eye; then you will certainly be more regular and uniform in all your particular practices. Set your face towards heaven betimes. Let it be the most solemn and unalterable business of your lives to please God on earth, in order to enjoy him in heaven; and then you will not be easily tempted aside by the flatteries or the terrors of this world, to go astray and wander in the paths that lead to hell. Give yourselves up to Christ both in secret and in public. Devote yourselves to him, to his fear, and love, and service, in your private retirements, and solemnize your obligations to him among the churches of his saints. See that you are an inward christian, and declare to the world, that you are a follower of Christ. Mix with the sheep of his flock, and you will find many advantages thereby to secure your truth and constancy. When a temptation comes to make you act like the sinners of this world, tell the world, and tell your own heart, that you are a christian, and you must pursue heaven.

II. Get above the fear of the world, and the shame of professing strict godliness. It is sinful shame, or sinful fear, that has a thousand times tempted the professors of the name of Christ, to be false to their profession, to act unbecoming their character, and inconsistent with christianity. It is from a certain feebleness and cowardice of soul that they desire, at any cost, to keep well with all men, and are afraid, sorely afraid, to be out of the fashion, or unconformable to this world: Therefore they venture upon some practice in company, that their hearts would abhor, if they were alone: Therefore they indulge many sinful compliances; sometimes they countenance the lewd and the profane, they join in a jest upon things sacred, they make the ministers of Christ their objects of ridicule; and sometimes they fall into sensuality, luxury, and excess, because they must do as their company does, and have not courage enough to refuse.

If we would be true to Christ, we must live above the world, and be dead to all its threatenings and reproaches. If we are afraid of being thought truly religious, we shall not be able to maintain religion in the truth of it. There needs a sacred courage to be constant in the faith. We must learn to *endure hardship as good soldiers of Christ*, if we

would be true to the *Captain of our salvation.* All that belong to his army are *chosen* and *faithful;* Rev. xvii. 14. It is a coward that changes his side as oft as the enemy makes a flourish, and he lists himself under every banner: But the constant christian is a soldier *faithful to the death, and he shall receive the crown of life;* Rev. ii. 10.

III. Never venture into the world without having solemnly committed yourself to the grace of Christ. Trust your soul afresh in the hands of Jesus every morning, that he may keep you true to himself all the day. All the divine motives you have learned, and all the solemn engagements under which you lay your own souls, will prove but a weak defence to virtue without faith and prayer. Commit yourselves to him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless. Your hearts, your lips, and your lives must be in his keeping, if you would have them true to God or man. Your adversary the devil is watchful and busy with all his wiles to tempt you to falsehood and inconstancy; none but he who has conquered the devil can be your sufficient guardian. And when and wheresoever we find frailty and folly in ourselves, O may the strength of Christ appear in our weakness, and be glorified in our preservation!

Thus I have finished all that I proposed concerning the first duty recommended in my text, Whatsoever things are true,—think on these things.

There may be perhaps some other instances wherein this divine character of truth, uprightness, or integrity, ought to appear in the conduct of christians, which do not so directly and immediately fall under the general heads which I have before named: But they may be easily reduced to one or another of them. There are various other methods of deceit and falsehood practised in the world, which break in upon this sacred character of truth, which I have not expressly mentioned before; such as subscribing with the hand to testify our assent to opinions which we do not believe; counterfeiting the names or writings of other persons without their knowledge, consent, or approbation; adding or blotting out any thing from divine writings; or doing the same to the writings of men in civil affairs or contracts, whereby one party or another may receive damage; practising fraud or deceit, or any criminal concealment in matters of traffic, or in matters of trust; and, in general, forgery and knavery of all kinds whatsoever: some of these may, by natural and easy consequences, be reduced to the heads I have spoken of, and are effectually precluded by the large description of moral truth which I have given: Others of them fall as naturally under the general head of justice and injustice, which will be the subject of one of the following discourses.

AN

APPENDIX

TO THE

THREE FOREGOING SERMONS,

WHEREIN TWO IMPORTANT QUESTIONS ABOUT TRUTH AND LYING, ARE DEBATED AT LARGE.

QUESTION I.

IF I have a good and valuable end in speaking, and my design is to serve the glory of God, or the good of my neighbour, may I not then use the art of lying, or speak a known falsehood, without sin? Did not Rahab the harlot practise this; *Joshua* ii. 4, 5. when she hid the spies of Israel, and told the messengers of the king of Jericho, that she knew not whence they came, nor whither they went? And yet she is commended by the apostle Paul; Heb. xi. 31. That *by faith the harlot Rahab perished not with unbelievers, when she received the spies in peace.*

Answer I. When any action, considered in itself, is utterly unlawful, it is not possible that the goodness of the end or design, can so change the law of God, or alter the nature of things, as to make that action lawful. The apostle Paul brings the same objection; Rom. iii. 7. *If the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory, why am I judged as a sinner?* But in the next verse, he speaks of it with indignation, as a heinous slander cast upon him, that he should maintain this pernicious doctrine, *Let us do evil that good may come:* And he adds concerning these slanderers, or concerning those who hold this doctrine of doing evil with a good design, that *their damnation is just;* ver. 8.

Answer II. The case of Rahab is easily adjusted in this manner, without allowing a lie to be lawful: Rahab, though she was a woman of evil fame in Jericho, yet had heard of the promise of God to Israel, to establish them in the land of Canaan; she believed this promise, and under the influence of this faith she entertained the spies, and thereby assisted the Israelites in the conquest of that city; so far her action is approved of God, and mentioned with honour: But she used a very sinful method in compassing this design, when she told a plain lie to the messengers of the king. The timorousness of her temper was a sore temptation to her; and though she fell into a criminal action, yet God so far excused the ill conduct, as to forgive the falsehood, and thereby put a more signal honour upon the eminence of her faith. Her name stands therefore recorded with honour in scripture among believers. But the lie, though it was pardoned, remains still a blemish to her character.

There may be also a reason given why the scripture does not particularly make any sharp remark upon this falsehood of Rahab; for the great degree of her ignorance does much lessen her fault, though not cancel it. A woman of her character, living in a heathen country, may well be supposed to have had little knowledge of the sinfulness of so beneficial a lie as that was, and no scruple about it.

But it is by no means a sufficient justification of her conduct, that the scripture does not directly censure her for lying; for there are many actions recorded in scripture, both of saints and sinners, which are utterly unlawful in the sight of God, which yet have not an express censure passed upon them. Rahab's being an harlot is not censured in any part of her history; nor Judah's defiling Tamar, his daughter-in-law; nor Jacob and Rebecca's complication of lies to gain the blessing; nor the most express and wicked lie of the old prophet in Bethel, though it was the cause of the death of another prophet; 1 *Kings* xiii. yet surely these were crimes of heinous guilt. The plain commands or prohibitions of scripture are the rules to govern our practice: Nor can we fetch the lawfulness or unlawfulness of any matter of fact from the mere silence of the historical part of scripture about it.

Question II. If there are some persons who have not a right to truth, may we not lawfully speak falsehood to them? Now to prove that some have not a right to truth, it is urged, that truth or veracity is a virtue or duty of the social life: But there are many questions may be asked in the social life which the speaker has no right to be informed of, and therefore he has no right to truth when they are answered; may we not then answer them with falsehood? There are also some characters of persons who seem to have no part in the social life, as children who are not capable of judging for themselves, nor acting regularly in society; may we not speak a falsehood to them for their good? There are some who practise no social virtues, such as knaves and cheats, thieves and pilferers; surely these have no right to truth, who are ever dealing in falsehood; and may we not cozen them who would cozen us?—I will first offer two or three general answers to the question, and then descend to consider the particular instances.

Answer I. Truth seems to be a matter of eternal right and unchangeable equity. And there are general and express commands given us in scripture to speak the truth, and there are as express prohibitions of falsehood and lies. Now if there were any such exceptions as these against the general rule, I think God would have given us some plainer evidence of these exceptions in so important a point as truth is, upon which the welfare of mankind so necessarily depends: But I cannot find any such evident exceptions given in the whole word of God.

Answer II. When we say a person has no right to truth, it may signify one of these two things:

1. That he has no right to demand of me a direct answer to his enquiry: And I will readily grant it in this sense, there are thousands who have no right to the truth; and therefore I may wave the question, I may give them an insufficient answer, or I may be silent, and boldly refuse to give them any answer at all. But,

2. If his having no right to truth be intended to signify, that the character of his person, or the nature of his question, is such as releases me from all obligation to truth in answering him, and that therefore I may lawfully tell him a falsehood; then I deny the proposition: For my obligation to speak truth doth not at all depend on the nature of his question, nor doth it depend merely on the character of the enquirer, but on the eternal rule of equity, and the command of God. And I think this appears from hence, that though I were alone, it would not be warrantable in me to assert with my lips a known falsehood; and in this case the right or claim of man can have no place nor consideration.

Answer III. If this exception be made to the plain law of God, that we may speak

a direct and express falsehood to any persons who in our esteem have no right to the truth in their enquiry; this seems to break all the bands of human society, violate all the faith of men, and render the divine commands of veracity and the prohibitions of falsehood almost useless. The consciences of men would find a way of escape from the greatest part of the bonds of duty, and yet think they committed no sin.

For let us consider, who it is that must judge whether the person to whom we speak has a right to truth or no. Is it not the speaker himself who will be the judge? Now if the speaker must judge whether his neighbour has a right to truth, there is no case wherein the speaker's interest may be anyways endangered by the truth, but his own sinful heart will readily whisper to him, that the hearer has no right to truth in such a question; and conscience will easily be warped aside, and comply to pronounce a known falsehood under the colour and pretence of this exception: As for instance, if the buyer asks the seller, how much he gave for such merchandize? The seller by this rule may tell him double the price that it cost; for he will say, the buyer has no right to truth in such a question as this is. So if I ask an artificer, how he fashions his work, or what tools he uses in it? He may by this rule give me a very false answer, under pretence that I have no right to truth.

I readily grant in these cases, that the enquirer has no right to demand and claim an answer to such questions; therefore the seller or the artificer may refuse to inform him. But it is surprising to think that any man should persuade himself, that such a question being once asked, gives him a right to tell a lie! That any person should ever believe, that the mere enquiry of a thing improper to be told, absolves the answerer from all the obligations of truth which his duty to God and man have laid upon him! Surely such a rule of conduct as this had need have better arguments to establish it. But those who maintain this principle, must rather recur to the character of the person who makes the enquiry; and here indeed they give a little better colour to their cause.

I come therefore now to give particular answers to the instances alledged: I. Concerning children. II. Concerning knaves and cheats.

Instance I. Will you say that children have no right to truth, because they are not capable of civil society?

But I reply, they are capable of knowing what truth and falsehood are, and of being influenced by the one or the other; they are capable of being deceived, and of knowing when they are deceived; they are capable of judging when they are treated with truth and sincerity, and acting according to the things you tell them; or else to what purpose do you speak falsehood to them instead of truth, and try to impose a lie upon them?

They are capable of resenting your conduct, when they find out the falsehood; and of refusing to believe you another time: For the very reason why they believe your falsehood at first, is, because they suppose you speak truth to them, and would not deceive them: And it is only upon this very principle that you yourselves can attempt to impose upon them.

Again, They are capable of learning from you, and imitating your conduct; and they will be so much more ready to practise lying, and to deceive you with it, when they have found you practising lies, in order to deceive them. Suppose a mother has now and then persuaded a child to take a wholesome bitter medicine, by saying it is not bitter, or has allured it to bed or to school by some of the arts of falsehood, and this child should imitate the mother's example, and grow up to a confirmed liar? what

inward and piercing reflections must the mother feel? Alas! I have taught my child this sinful practice; I myself have led it into the ways of the devil! How can I chide and correct by my reproof that vice, which I have taught by my example?

It is sufficiently evident, therefore, that though children are not capable of half the duties of the social life, yet they are so far capable of them, as to know what truth and falsehood are, and to resent, and to practise accordingly: And this is sufficient to the present argument, and fully answers the objection. I think therefore it is infinitely better to allure those, whose understandings are weak, and whose wills are obstinate, to the practice of duty, by all the gentle arts of softness and fondness, of persuasion and love, than by venturing to make an inroad upon our own sincerity, and to trifle with so sacred a thing as truth.

But the querist may say, Suppose these softer arts have been tried, and have no effect, and children may be in danger of destroying themselves, if they are not immediately prevented by some plain and express falsehood; is it then unlawful to preserve their lives by a lie?

Answer. It is a command of God indeed to preserve life, but it must be done by lawful means. May a man rob on the highway, to get money to feed and clothe him? Surely we ought to trust the kind care and providence of God with our own lives and others in the way of duty, and not to do evil that good may come, as was said under the former question.

Thus much shall suffice for the case of children, on pretence of their being incapable of civil society. But the querist will insist still on the next instance:

Instance II. Cheats and knaves, and thievish criminals, have no right to truth; for they have broken the bonds of civil society, though not by a public renunciation of them, and therefore we may use all manner of deceit toward them, and treat them with express falsehood and lying, wheresoever it may promote our own interest and safety.

To this I reply, that the rule of Christ is, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye also that unto them;* Matt. vii. 12. But this licentious doctrine cancels this divine rule, and substitutes another in the room of it, viz. *Whatsoever men do unto you, do ye also that unto them;* which is as widely different from the sacred rule of Christ, as light is from darkness, or heaven from hell. By this new rule we are no longer bound to practise that truth, that justice, that goodness to others, which we think reasonable they should practise towards us; but we have leave to practise that falsehood and knavery, that fraud, and injustice, and mischief to others, which they do actually practise towards us, or which we suspect they design to practise.

If one half of a city or a nation were fallen into knavish practices, through the great degeneracy of the age, or were become thievish pilferers, the other half would, by this rule, practise knavery with licence toward them, and deal out falsehoods to them by divine permission. And then the charge would quickly be just and universal, *There is no truth in the land;* as *Hos.* iv. 1.

There is indeed scarce any censure of a degenerate and corrupt age, under the Old Testament, but fraud and deceit, lies and falsehood, make a considerable part of the accusation or complaint; and surely God would never allow any principles or practices that have so pernicious a tendency. Hear how the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah lament their multiplied transgressions in *conceiving and uttering from the heart words*

of falsehood: Truth is fallen into the street, yea truth faileth, and equity cannot enter; Isaiah lix. *This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the Lord. Truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth. They deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth; they bend their tongues like their bow for lies;* Jer. vii. and ix. Now if this licentious principle were allowed, neither God nor his prophets would ever want matter of complaint.

By this means also it will come to pass, that if a man happen once to get the name and character of a thief or a cheat, all his neighbours will think themselves authorized to have no regard to truth or honesty in all their dealings and discourse with him; for this rule affirms that he has no right to truth. And when any person fancies that he has seen reason to suspect or disbelieve his neighbour's honesty, he will think himself absolved from all obligations to speak truth to him. But what a wide and dreadful floodgate would be opened by this means, to let in an inundation of fraud and falsehood, and to practise all manner of deceit!

Let it be remarked also, that this doctrine is near a-kin to the popish abomination, "That no faith is to be kept with heretics; for they are a sort of dangerous men, who would ruin the church, and therefore they have no right to truth." Now what shameful and horrid perjuries, and what execrable mischiefs, have sprung from this one impious principle of the church of Rome! The word of God gives no manner of indulgence to such licentious principles as these. We must wrong no man, defraud no man; we must not render to any man evil for evil, nor falsehood for falsehood, but overcome his evil with our good: And we must *provide things honest in the sight of all men.*

It will be said, perhaps, that the scripture most frequently mentions a neighbour, or a brother, or a fellow-christian, in the prohibitions of lying and falsehood, as in the ninth commandment, *Bear no false witness against thy neighbour.* 1 Thess. iv. 6, *No man defraud his brother.* Eph. iv. 25, *Speak every man truth to his neighbour.* Lev. xix. 11, *Lie not one to another.*

But let it be replied, that the scripture demands righteousness for the stranger also; *Deut.* i. 16. and in several other places. And when God, by his prophet Malachi, forbids *treacherous dealings with a brother,* he gives this reason for it, *Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?* Therefore all mankind are brethren in this sense. Our duty to speak and practise truth, arises from our obligations to the law of God; and since God has not released us by any such exceptions, the lying and deceitful carriage of men does not authorize us to practise deceit and lying. It is indeed a piece of an old Latin verse, that is in the mouth of many, "*Fallere fallentem non est fraus;*" which may be englished thus, To cheat a knave is no cheating: But I know no verse in scripture that gives us this liberty. And I think we may by the same rule steal from them that would steal from us, or plunder those who would plunder us.

I will readily grant, that when a contract or bargain is made, whereby both parties are obliged mutually to perform something to or for each other, whether this contract be expressed in verbal promises, or implied in the nature of things, and by the known customs of mankind, then if one of the parties fail of performance, the other is thereby released from his promise or engagement: And the reason is most evident, because the promise or engagement was made in a conditional manner; and if the condition on one side be not fulfilled, the agreement or bargain on the other side is void, and utterly

ceases; so that a man is innocent in this case, though he does not perform his promise. Now this is so well known to all men by the light of nature, and the easiest reasoning, that there is no need to enlarge upon it.

According to this general and known rule, suppose a merchant order any quantity of goods from his correspondent by the first ship, and promise payment by such a day; if the sending of those goods be neglected, and carelessly delayed, the merchant is not bound to keep his first appointed time for payment. An hundred instances there are of the like nature, which a small degree of reason, and an honest conscience, will easily determine, without intrenching upon truth. Such is the case of all conditional promises and contracts. But if a man be never so great a knave, and I should make him a lawful and an absolute promise of any thing, surely I ought to perform it, and not satisfy my conscience in the practice of deceit and falsehood, under a pretence that he had no right to truth.

There are other cases which may occur in human affairs, and create difficulty in the minds of sincere christians, a solution of which may be found in books written on those subjects: But I think most of them may be easily answered by the general principles before laid down: And, to finish this subject, I add, that I know of no circumstances that can make a plain, and express, and known lie to become lawful: If life itself were in danger, yet the express prohibitions of falsehood and lying in the law of God, make it safer, in point of conscience, to venture the loss of any earthly comfort, and life also, rather than venture upon a plain and solemn lie.

And, in my opinion, that man, who, being assisted by divine grace, maintains the truth boldly, or refuses to speak a known falsehood to a murderer, or a bloody tyrant, and bravely resigns his life upon the spot, he dies a martyr to truth; his name shall be registered with honour among the saints of God on earth, and his soul shall have its place among the martyrs in the upper world.

HYMN FOR SERMON XXII.

FAITHFULNESS.

I.

HATH God been faithful to his word,
And sent to men the promis'd grace?
Shall I not imitate the Lord,
And practise what my lips profess?

II.

Hath Christ fulfill'd his kind design,
The dreadful work he undertook,
And died to make salvation mine,
And well perform'd whate'er he spoke?

III.

Doth not his faithfulness afford
A noble theme to raise my song?
And shall I dare deny my Lord,
Or utter falsehood with my tongue?

IV.

My king, my Saviour, and my God!
Let grace my sinful soul renew,
Wash my offences with thy blood,
And make my heart sincere and true.

SERMON XXIII.

CHRISTIAN MORALITY, viz. GRAVITY, DECENCY, &c.

PHILIP. iv. 8.

WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE HONEST, *OR GRAVE*, &c.—THINK ON THESE THINGS.

Ὅσα σεμνὰ, &c.

SINCE the translation of the Bible into the English tongue is so excellent a performance in itself, and so necessary a service to the church; I feel a sensible regret, whensoever there is occasion to complain of it, or to correct it. In the main, I may venture to say boldly, it teaches us all the necessary doctrines and duties of christianity in a very ample and complete manner, and sets them in an evident light: And what the Spirit of God spoke in ancient times in Greek and Hebrew, is sufficiently manifested to us for our salvation in the English Bible.

But in this part of the verse, which I am now to discourse of, the word which we render honest, is not so well translated as I could wish; for honesty is contained in the words true and just, which go before, and follow my text. But the Greek *σεμνὸς*, more properly signifies grave, decent, or venerable; and so you find it in the margin, which will oftentimes help you, when the word in the English text is not so expressive of the original sense. The same word *σεμνὸς* is rendered grave in several other places of scripture: It is three times so expressed in the third chapter of the first epistle to Timothy, ver. 8. *The deacons must be grave.* Ver. 11. *Their wives also must be grave.* Ver. 5. *A bishop must have his children in subjection with all gravity.*

It is a word that is used in Greek authors to represent the character of an aged man, a philosopher, or a magistrate, among the heathens. It carries in it the idea of an honourable gravity, and a venerable decency of behaviour; and this is what the apostle recommends to the practice of christians. It is as if he had said, "The character of every common christian should have something in it so honourable, as may command a sort of veneration and respect from all persons they converse with, as much as the character of a wise old man, a magistrate, or a philosopher, does in the heathen world."

To improve this subject, I shall shew,

I. Wherein this gravity consists.

II. How the light of nature recommends it.

III. How the gospel inforces it.

IV. Lay down a direction or two, in order to obtain it.

First, This gravity and venerable decency which the apostle recommends in my text, may be supposed to consist in these three things:

1. A moderation and decency in our apparel.

2. A gravity and sobriety in our speech and conversation.

3. Honour, decency, and dignity in our whole deportment and behaviour.

1. A moderation and decency in our apparel, such as becomes the profession of persons whose chief ornament is religion and godliness. This the apostles, both St. Peter and St. Paul, each in their turn, insist upon, as a necessary qualification of women who profess christianity, and as an ornament to the gospel of the doctrine of Christ. 1 *Pet.* iii. 2, 3. Let your conversation be with fear; *whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and wearing of gold.* 1 Tim. ii. 9, 10. the apostle Paul bids Timothy the young evangelist teach the same doctrine and practice. *In like manner*, I will *also*, *that women adorn themselves in modest apparel with shamefacedness and sobriety: as becometh women professing godliness*—Not that all christians must utterly abandon those richer and more costly methods of ornament, gold or pearls, which the apostle there makes mention of; for every one of us should wear such raiment as suits our character and our age, our company and business in the world: But let not these be our chief ornaments, still remembering that we are christians; and let our apparel, as well as our conversation, shew that we despise trifles, and thus maintain the dignity of our high and holy calling.

"Here," saith a learned commentator,* "it is worthy to be noted by the women, that this precept ought not to be slighted by them, as of little moment, seeing it is so carefully inculcated by the two chief apostles of the Jew and Gentile, St. Peter and St. Paul; and the contrary is represented as a practice opposite to godliness."

Nor while you are dressing, should you forget that you are sinners, and therefore should put on shamefacedness; for all our ornaments and clothing are but a memorial of our first sin and shame; and when we take a pride in our garments, it looks as if we had forgotten the original of them, the loss of our innocency. Nor is this sort of advice to be confined to the female world: "For," as the same author expresses it, "if it be so unbecoming a christian woman to be thus concerned in adorning and tricking up her body, it must be much more unbecoming a christian man, and that which makes him truly to deserve the name of a fop." It is a token of a light and vain mind to be too fond of gaudy habits, a mind not much affected with sin or with salvation. Surely christians are born for greater things, and their aim should point at higher excellencies than these are. Let their chief ornaments be the graces of the Spirit, and the virtues of the heart and life. A well adorned body, and a neglected mind, very ill become a professor of the gospel.

Christians should look like strangers and pilgrims here, and not think themselves undressed, unless they are conformed to all the niceties and vain fashions of the world. Sometimes, it may be, we are too much afraid we shall not look like the children of this world; whereas the apostle advises us rather to look like strangers. We are travelling homeward through a foreign country, having the ornaments of holiness on us, which is the raiment of heaven. I confess, we are not required to affect singularity, nor to seek a foolish and useless distinction from the customs of our country, where they are proper, innocent, and becoming; for the kingdom of God does not consist in any affected peculiarities of dress or behaviour; but let us remember too, that it is below the glory of our character, and the dignity of our calling, to have our thoughts uneasy, if every pin and point that belongs to our apparel be not placed in the most fashionable manner; to fret and rage, if every fold of a garment be not adjusted in perfect conformity to the mode.

* Dr. Whitby.

Then we may be said to fall short of that venerable decency in our apparel which christianity should teach us, when we are among the first in any new devised and gaudy fashions; when we are some of the foremost in the gaieties of the age: When we run to the extremes of every new mode, and affect to vie with the vainest of our sex: When the business of dressing is made one of the most frequent, important, and solemn enquiries and concerns of life; and when it employs some of our most serious thoughts and our warmest passions: When we indulge a greater expence in finery than our circumstances will allow, or our stations require: When we waste more time in adorning ourselves, than the duties we owe to God or man will reasonably permit; and especially if we intrench upon the hours which should be devoted to sacred purposes. I should add also, that then we certainly break in upon christian sobriety, when we indulge such sort of clothing as in its own nature becomes a temptation to immodesty, and brings fuel to the impure fire of the eyes, or of the heart.

I would not be thought to treat too largely upon this subject, or handle it too severely: but let us remember, that our biggest danger in this age is excess, and luxury, and vanity of mind: We are pretty secure now-a-days from too great a carelessness in this respect.

II. Gravity and sobriety in our speech is another part of that honourable conduct and character which we ought to maintain, and to which the holy apostle invites us. In the second chapter of Titus, *ver.* 6, 7, 8. you have this direction of the apostle to Titus the evangelist, how he ought to behave himself, and what he speaks to him, chiefly as a minister, may be given as a rule to all christians whom he must instruct in all things, *shewing thyself a pattern of good works; in doctrine*, or in discourse, *shewing uncorruptness, gravity, and sincerity; sound speech that cannot be condemned, that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil to say of you.* He gives all the christians at Ephesus the same advice; Eph. iv. 29. *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.* Talk of something that may improve one another in knowledge, in virtue, in religion: And let each of us be ashamed to think that we have been an hour or two in each other's company, and have neither spoke nor heard any thing that is worth remembrance. How often, after a visit among friends, must we take up this just and shameful complaint, "Alas, I have said nothing for their improvement, nor heard any thing for my own!"

In *Eph.* v. 4. the apostle there secludes some sort of conversation from the lips of christians, *Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient*, which are ἐκ ἀνήκοντα, not agreeable to our profession. Foolish talking and jesting are here forbidden, as well as filthiness. By foolish talking, we may suppose such sort of language to be intended, from which it is impossible any profit or advantage should arise to a wise or a good man. And by jesting, the apostle here designs such sharp and biting jests that wound the reputation of a person concerning whom they are spoken. Such a turn of wit, as the original word signifies, that at the same time wounds a good name, and gives a bitter reproach. Not that every thing pleasantly spoken is supposed to be unlawful; or that the apostle any where forbids all manner of mirth and jesting in conversation, for there are proper times and seasons for such sort of discourse: And there may be valuable ends in it too, when it is innocently used, on purpose to recreate nature, and refresh the mind. And how far this may be indulged, I shall have occasion to speak toward the end of this sermon.

III. Another thing that is included in this word gravity, is honour and decency in our whole deportment and behaviour. Each of us should be careful to maintain our public character as a christian, with a due sense of the dignity of it. Christians should be ashamed to debase the powers of their nature, to practise any thing that is sordid and unworthy; nor make the members of their flesh, nor the faculties of their mind, slaves to that which is ridiculous or foolish.

How unbecoming is it to see a christian spoil his countenance, and disfigure a human face, by practising all the wild and wanton grimaces of folly and madness! To see man, who is made after the image of the Son of God, distort his body in the most antic postures, and give up all the honours of his nature to base and senseless merriment! Surely the duties of christianity lead us to nothing below the dignity of man. Here I would not be mistaken, nor do I pretend that the gospel requires such a constant solemnity of countenance and language, as though we were all preachers, or always preaching. There is no need to put on serious airs at all times: We are not bound to banish mirth when we become christians. Laughter is a natural action, and the faculty was not given to mankind in vain, nor is the exercise of it forbidden for ever.

The chief ends of it seem to be these two; either to recreate animal nature by expressions of mirth, or to put folly out of countenance.

There may be times to recreate nature, to unbend the spirits from business, and to indulge mirth among our friends. The wise man assures us, there is a time to laugh, as well as to mourn. There are times proper for weeping, and some persons may have times for dancing too; *Eccles.* iii. 4. And in the 19th verse of the xth chapter, the same divine writer says, *a feast is made for laughter.* At the mutual entertainment of friends we may be merry, and not sin. Our holy religion only demands this of us, that we confine our mirth within the limits of virtue, and take heed lest when we give a loose to the sprightly powers of animal nature, we should transgress the rules of piety, or trespass upon the things sacred.

Another purpose for which laughter was made, is to reprove and punish folly, and put vice out of countenance. There are seasons wherein a wise man or a christian may treat some criminal or silly characters with ridicule and mockery. Elijah the prophet condescended thus to correct the priests and worshippers of Baal; but this sort of conversation must by no means be the business of our lives, and the daily work and labour of our thoughts and our tongues. It is *the heart of a fool that is in the house of mirth,* for he would dwell there continually; *Eccles.* vii. 4. If we are always affecting to throw out some turns of wit upon every occurrence of life, and tack on a jest to every thing that is spoken: if we interline all our discourse and conversation with merriment, banter and joking, it is very unworthy of that gravity and honour that belong to the christian life.

The second head of discourse which I proposed, is to prove, that the light of nature, or the law of reason, requires something of this gravity of speech and behaviour; and this is manifest, if we consider the nature of man in opposition to the brute that perishes, or the growth and age of man in distinction from children and babes.

1. If we consider man in opposition to the brutal world: Man, who has a rational soul, should act conformable to that sublime principle within him, and not devote himself to a life of fantastic humour, or content himself with the character of an everlasting trifler. What a poor and contemptible account is it of any person to say, he

is a walking jest, a mere living trifle? His thoughts are made up of vanity and emptiness, his voice is laughter, and his whole life is composed of impertinences.

There is a sort of persons in the world who never think well of themselves but when they are dressed in gay attire, and hope to command the respect of mankind by spreading abroad their own fine feathers. Their raiment is the brightest and best thing that belongs to them, and therefore they affect to shew it. There is another sort of men who value themselves upon their merry humour, and that they can make their company laugh when they please. But the more refined and rational part of the world value all these creatures as they do peacocks, or other animals that imitate the voice and actions of man. They use them as an entertainment for their eyes or ears, to give a fit of diversion, or to pass away a merry hour. We generally look upon this kind of people as very worthless things, as something beneath ourselves, and as sinking below their own species. We seldom converse with them upon the level, or to attain any of the nobler purposes of life. We only borrow their wit, or their folly, their humour, or their finery, for a season of amusement, and justly despise them when the laughing hour is at an end. Reason itself tells us, that human nature was made for something greater and better, for contemplation and action much superior to what these trifling creatures are acquainted with. Again,

2. If we consider man as he stands in distinction from childhood, surely a more grave and solemn carriage becomes him. Children are pleased with painted toys; gaudy garments and sounding trifles are their chief delight. They are entertained with little impertinences, agreeable to their ignorance and the weakness of their age: But it is a shame to a person of well grown years to practise the child for ever. He that devotes himself to a life of useless idleness, and treads round the circle of perpetual mirth and amusement, without profit to himself or the world, is but a child in longer garments, or an infant of larger size.

The third general head leads us to consider, what forcible arguments christianity furnishes us with to practise this sobriety, gravity, and decency of behaviour: And I shall throw them all into a few expostulations.

1. Do we not bear the name of Christ, a sacred and a venerable name? And shall we cast disgrace upon it by any thing that is mean and dishonourable? Do we not profess to be the followers of a crucified Jesus, to be disciples of the cross? But wherein do we follow him, if we spend our days in mirth and trifling? His conduct was all holy and heavenly, and we can never look like his disciples, if our conversation savour of earth and vanity. What a noble simplicity runs through all his speeches, through all the actions and the behaviour of our blessed Lord! And how little do we imitate him, if we fondly pursue the gay follies of life in our dress, in our speech, and in every thing we do! No glarings of affected wit, nor insipid pertness, can add any thing to our character as christians.

2. Let us remember that we are the sons and daughters of the most high God. We profess to separate ourselves from the triflings and impertinences of this world, as well as from the impiety and guilt of it. "Come out from among them, saith the Lord, and I will be your Father, and ye shall be my sons and my daughters, saith God Almighty." Surely the children of a prince should behave with solemnity and honour, when they are in the midst of the lower orders of mankind; and the children of the King of heaven should remember the dignity of their birth, and their high relation, when they are con-

versant among the sons of earth. Their carriage indeed should not be proud and haughty to the men of this world; Jesus, the only begotten Son, was meek and lowly: And there is a sacred art of maintaining a divine humility, among the meanest of our fellow-creatures, without indulging the practice of any thing mean and ridiculous. Our blessed Lord was a companion of fishermen, but not of mimics and public jesters.

3. Let us think again, that we are bought with a high and valuable price; *we are redeemed, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot;* 1 Pet. i. 17, 18. And what is it that we are redeemed from? It is from this evil world, and from a vain conversation. The Son of God hath *loved us, and washed us in his own blood,* and shall we defile these souls of ours with the meannesses of this life which Christ hath cleansed in so rich a laver? He hath *made us kings and priests unto God and his Father.* Let us now and then ask ourselves and enquire, is our language and behaviour becoming such illustrious names, such titles, such honours as are put upon us by the Father and the Son?

4. Again let us review our profession; What is our calling? What is our design? What is our hope? Are we not born from above? Are we not pilgrims and strangers here? Do we not profess to seek a better country, that is, a heavenly? Do we not live for heaven and immortality? How unbecoming is it then for christians to be perpetually light, and vain, and frothy? How unbecoming our holy and heavenly calling, and our everlasting hopes! If we are children of the light and of the day, let us not live as though we belonged to the night and darkness: let us not sleep, nor trifle as others do, but watch and be sober. And especially if our natural temper be sanguine and sprightly, and incline to assume vain airs, there is more need of constant watchfulness over the heart and life, and a bridle upon the tongue, lest we should speak indecencies, and be guilty of folly and madness.

This Sermon may be divided here.

The last thing I designed, was to propose some directions in order to cure the levity of the mind, and to maintain such a decent gravity in the course of our life as becomes the gospel.

Direction I. Let us meditate often on the most sublime and the most awful parts of christianity; and through the assistance of the Spirit of God, these will be effectual guards against this vanity of temper.

The sublime truths of christianity demand our frequent review. Let us often rise high in our thoughts, and let our faith look far backwards to the eternal ages before this world was. Let us contemplate the love of God the Father, in contriving our salvation, before he stretched abroad these heavens, or laid the foundations of this earth. Let us think of the condescension of his mercy, when he chose fallen perishing sinners to be the objects of his everlasting love. Let us dwell upon his compassion to man, when he appointed his own Son to take flesh upon him, and to become our Mediator and sacrifice. Let us survey with holy wonder the various glories of the Son of God, by whom and for whom all things were made, who upholds all things by the word of his power, and who is the express image of his Father. Let us behold him consenting to hide all these honours behind a veil of flesh and blood, walking the streets of Jerusalem, and travelling on foot through the villages of Israel, attended with a few poor despicable men, or surrounded with the reproaches of the blaspheming Jews. Let us look upon

this illustrious person, who was adored by angels, yet unknown and unglorified among the sons of men, and humbled even to death and the grave; then gaze on him rising again from the dead, and declared to be the Son of God with power, exalted at the right-hand of the Majesty on high, and ruling all the millions of inhabitants of the visible and invisible worlds. Surely if our souls were inured to the meditation of such sublime wonders as these, we should not easily immerse ourselves in trifles and fooleries.

Again, let us meditate on the more awful doctrines, the more solemn and dreadful truths of our religion, and these will be an effectual restraint to a vain temper of mind. Let us think on the justice of God manifested in the destruction of sinners in all ages, when it appeared in a prodigious flood of water, and with a deluge of ruin testified against the wickedness of the old world; and when it came down in flaming fire upon Sodom, and upon the cities of the plain. Let us meditate on the wrath of God, that has been revealed in numerous instances against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Let us contemplate that divine and severe justice, that appeared in the sufferings and death of God's own Son, when it pleased the Father to bruise him, and to make his soul an offering for sin. Let us think of his agonies in the garden, and on the cross, when he bore the weight of our iniquities, and stood in the place of sinners. Let us send our thoughts down to the regions of death and hell, and behold the fallen angels bound in chains of darkness, and groaning under present torments, yet waiting for the day of greater vengeance. Let us think with ourselves what millions of our fellow-sinners, the sons and daughters of Adam, lie there banished from the presence of the Lord, and tormented with fire in their consciences without remedy, and without hope, and say, Why are not we there too?

Let us often look forward to the awful moment of our death, and the time of our departure from all the flattering scenes of this present world. This will put a damp upon the vainest mind, and hang with a painful weight upon the sons of mirth and levity. This will be a means to restrain us from that foolish and trifling behaviour, which otherwise our tempers might incline us to. And let us remember the solemn hour when we must stand before the tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ, divested of all these gaudy shews of life, in which we are now ready to pride ourselves, and there we must receive a sentence without repeal, which shall send us to heaven or to hell at once; and fix our everlasting state. These are terrors or glories too solemn to be trifled with; these are thoughts that will hold our souls awake and serious; this will preserve that gravity of mind which becomes a christian, and keep us in a prepared temper to fulfil present duty, and to wait the final event of all things.

II. If we would maintain that venerable decency in our frame of spirit, and in our deportment, which becomes the gospel, let us set ourselves about some useful employment for the service of God, or our fellow-creatures, or for our own best improvement. If Satan find the mind empty of thought, and the hands void of all business, he will be ready to fill them with temptations to iniquity and mischief: And the triflers of this world will be ready to seize upon such a person as a fit partner for their impertinences, and allure him into follies beneath the dignity of human nature, and the character of a christian.

I have often pitied some of the descendants of honourable and wealthy families, of both

sexes, the unhappiness of whose education has given them nothing to do, nor taught them to employ their hands or their minds: Therefore they spend their hours in sauntering, not knowing whither to go, and are at a loss what to do with themselves to wear their life away. Upon this account they give themselves up sometimes to the mean and scandalous pleasures of the lowest of the people, and spend their hours in chattering and vulgar merriment. They make the business of their dress the study and labour of half the day, and spend another part of it in trifling discourse and laughter, and in scattering jests and scandal upon their neighbours or acquaintance. All these pieces of folly and immorality would be rectified, if they would but find out for themselves some daily and proper business to be employed in. King Solomon at his leisure hours studied natural and moral philosophy, he discoursed of the nature of vegetables, from the cedar to the hyssop, and of beasts, birds, and fishes, besides his proverbs and rules of prudence for the government of human life; 1 *Kings* iv. 32, 33. St. Paul, when he was not employed in his sacred work, yet he would not be idle; and having no need to study for his sermons which he had by inspiration, therefore he wrought with his hands at tent-making, and maintained himself by it: "*Not*, says he, *because we have not power to eat your bread while we teach you the gospel; but to make ourselves an example to you.*" See *Acts* xviii. 3. and 2 *Thess.* iii. 8, 9. And good Dorcas, when she had no business of her own, *made coats and garments for the poor;* Acts ix. 36, 39. Such honourable examples as these deserve our imitation.

III. Let us keep a strict watch over ourselves when we indulge mirth, and set a double guard upon the seasons of recreation and divertisement.

The rules of religion do not so restrain us from the common entertainments of life, as to render us melancholy creatures, and unfit for company. There is no need to become mere mopes or hermits, in order to be christians. The gospel does not deprive us of such joys as belong to our natures, but it refines and heightens our delights. It draws our souls farther away from mean and brutal pleasures, and raises them to manly satisfactions, to entertainments worthy of a rational nature, worthy of a creature that is made in the image of God. The innocent entertainments of life are not utterly forbidden to christians, but are regulated by the gospel.

When we have considered and found them to be lawful, then they are to be regulated these two ways.

1. All our recreations and divertisements must have some valuable end proposed.

2. We must distinguish the proper time and season of them, and confine our diversions to that season.

1. They must always have some valuable end proposed. The chief and most useful design of them is to make us more cheerful and fitter for some hours or days of service afterwards. Recreation must not be our trade or business, but merely used as a means to prepare us for the valuable businesses of life.

The scripture indeed tells us, that "*of every idle word that men shall speak, there shall be an account given in the day of judgment;*" Matt. xii. 36. And much more of idle hours and actions. But this doth not utterly exclude all manner of recreations, or all words of pleasantry, which may be innocently and properly used upon some occasions; but whatsoever words, whatsoever conversation, whatsoever sort of pleasurable entertainments, we indulge ourselves in, which have no valuable end, no useful design in them: These will bear but an ill aspect before the judgment-seat of Christ. We shall

not be able to give a tolerable account of such idle words or hours at that day; and it is the judge himself who tells us so, and adds his *amen* to it.

It is proper more especially for persons that are of a melancholy temper, or that have perhaps been overwhelmed with bodily diseases, or overloaded with some sorrows, or cares, or businesses of life, to give themselves a little loose or diversion now and then in delightful conversation, or other recreations and exercises. These may be as useful as a glass of wine to refresh nature, to make the heart glad and the spirits lightsome; for they tend to fit this animal body of ours for better service to the soul in future duties that God calls us to: And so long as we confine our recreations to this design, and keep this end in view, our words of pleasantry in private conversation, and even our recreations and diversions that are more public, may be agreeable to the mind and will of God; for it is his will, that our whole nature, flesh and spirit, should be kept in the fittest frame for duty. And some natures are so constituted, that they will hardly be kept in a temper fit for duty, without some divertisements and recreations. Where this therefore is the end, these practices cannot be called idle, that is, impertinent, and to no purpose. But where no reasonable design is proposed, sports and merriments are hardly to be defended, for all rational creatures ought to act with a view to some valuable end.

2. Another regulation which ought to be given to all our diversions, is this; we should narrowly watch, lest the time of our recreations intrude upon the hours and seasons of business or of religion. There is a time to laugh, the wise man tells us, as well as a time to labour or to pray; but laughter must be confined to its proper place and proper time, and not intrench upon the season where affairs of bigger importance, and matters of grave and serious consequence should be transacted.

Conscience has something to do in matters of recreation as well as in our religious or civil affairs: And as it can never be lawful to rob God or our families of any of the time that should be devoted to their service, on purpose to lay it out in diversion, so neither is it by any means proper to let the seasons of diversion come too near the seasons of worship. When a loose is given to all the natural powers in mirth and pleasure, they are not so easily recollected all at once for the sacred service of religion. Nor should we run hastily away from the duties of worship, and plunge ourselves into the midst even of innocent merriment; for this would look as though we were weary of devotion, and longed to be at play. A wise christian will divide his times aright, and make all the parts of his conduct to succeed one another in a decent order.

Besides, the hours of recreation should not be multiplied by those persons who have least need of them; such are persons of a cheerful and healthy constitution: And they will be used more sparingly by christians of maturer age, and longer standing in religion. As a child grows up toward man, he leaves off the impertinences of infancy, and the sports and trifles of childhood; and as a man grows up more and more toward a perfect christian, his methods of pleasure will be changed from light and gay, to that which is grave and solid.

To conclude this subject, I would mention only one powerful motive to preserve christian gravity, and that is, that hereby the temper of your spirit will be better prepared for every religious duty, whether it be prayer or praise, and better fitted to meet every providence, whether it be prosperous or afflictive: Whereas those who perpetually indulge a merry temper of mind, when a prosperous providence attends them, they are

tempted to excessive vanity and carnal joy; their hearts are not filled with thankfulness to that God from whom their mercies come, being too thoughtless and regardless of the original donor. On the other hand, when affliction smites them, they are in danger of despising the stroke of the rod, nor does the correction of their heavenly Father make so deep and useful an impression upon their spirit as it ought to do.

When in the course of our lives we maintain such a grave and composed frame as becomes a christian, we find our hearts more ready for all the duties of worship. We are prepared to receive evil tidings as well as good, and to attend on the will of God in all his outgoings of providence: We are ready to receive messages of sorrow, or the summons of death, for we are still conversing with God: We keep the invisible world in the eye of our faith: And our spirits are ready prepared to depart from the flesh, and to meet our God and our Saviour in the unknown regions of light and immortality.

HYMN FOR SERMON XXIII.

CHRISTIAN MORALITY, viz. GRAVITY, DECENCY, &c.

I.

ARE we not sons and heirs of God?
Are we not bought with Jesus' blood?
Do we not hope for heavenly joys,
And shall we stoop to trifling toys?

II.

Can laughter feed th' immortal mind?
Were spirits of celestial kind
Made for a jest, for sport and play,
To wear out time, and waste the day?

III.

Doth vain discourse or empty mirth
Well suit the honours of our birth?
Shall we be fond of gay attire,
Which children love, and fools admire?

IV.

What if we wear the richest vest,
Peacocks and flies are better drest:
This flesh, with all its gaudy forms,
Must drop to dust and feed the worms.

V.

Lord, raise our hearts and passions higher;
Touch our vain souls with sacred fire;
Then with an elevated eye
We'll pass these glittering trifles by.

VI.

We'll look on all the toys below
With such disdain as angels do,
And wait the call that bids us rise
To promis'd mansions in the skies.

SERMON XXIV.

CHRISTIAN MORALITY, viz. JUSTICE, &c.

PHILIP. iv. 8.

WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE TRUE, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE HONEST, *OR GRAVE*, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE JUST,—THINK ON THESE THINGS.

Ὅσα ἐστι δίκαια,——

IN many parts of the sacred writings, there appears a very close connection of the subjects which are handled; a natural order is observed, and a beautiful transition made from one to the other: But this is not to be expected in every text, nor is it at all necessary that it should be so. When St. Paul enumerates several virtues or vices, he sometimes heaps them together, and doth not design any regularity or natural order in placing them. Our commentators therefore in such cases, when they are once resolved to find these beauties and connections where the holy writer did not intend them, they oftentimes torture and strain both their own invention, and the words of scripture. Thus, I fear, I should do, if I would attempt to give a reason why the apostle in this collection of virtues, named gravity or decency before justice, which is of so much greater importance in the christian life.

I take them therefore in the order in which they lie; and having treated of truth and gravity, I proceed now to consider the third piece of morality which he mentions, that is, justice. "*Whatsoever things are just*,"—think on these things; let these be the objects of your meditation and of your practice.

And here if I should entertain you in two discourses with this single subject of justice, I hope I shall not exceed the limits of your patience: For it is what the apostle frequently insists upon as a glory to christianity, that those that profess it be just or righteous. You who have fixed your hope on the grace of God, and have a design to honour the gospel, to you I would recommend this great duty of the law, and that in this method:

I. I shall endeavour to shew what is the general nature of this justice, and lay down the universal rule of it.

II. Discover in various special instances what those things are which are just, or wherein our justice or righteousness must appear.

III. I shall give some proof of this great duty of justice or righteousness by the light of nature, and according to the law of reason.

IV. Shew what forcible influence the gospel of Christ has to recommend justice to your meditation and practice.

V. Propose a few directions how to guard yourselves against temptations to injustice, or rather point out some of the chief springs of injustice, that you may avoid them.

And while I proceed in this work, you will rejoice inwardly if you find your own consciences sincerely answering to the characters of this virtue in any good measure: And

if there be any shall find himself a guilty sinner, and very deficient in this practice, let him be reproved, ashamed, and amend.

First then, Let us consider the nature of this justice, and what is the most universal rule of it.

In general, justice consists in giving to every one their due. According to the stations in which God has placed us, and according to the several relations in which providence has joined us to our fellow-creatures, every person we converse with hath something due to him; and this we are bound to pay as men, and much more as christians. But since cases and circumstances are infinite, and it is impossible for any book to contain, or any man to receive and remember so many special rules for justice, as there may be occurring circumstances in the world, which require the practice of it; our Lord Jesus Christ has therefore given us one short rule whereby to judge what is due to every man, and fitted it to every purpose: Matt. vii. 12. *All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them: For this is the law and the prophets.*

I confess there may happen in human affairs some cases of such exceeding intricacy and difficulty, that very few persons have skill enough to determine precisely what is due, or what would be strictly just and righteous: Nor will this rule infallibly lead us into the perfect knowledge of it; but even in such cases, a sincere honest man consulting his own conscience, and asking, what he thought reasonable that his neighbour, in the like case, should do to him, would seldom wander far from strict justice; and by practising agreeably to this general law, he would approve his conduct both in the sight of God and men.

Thus our blessed Saviour hath set up a court of equity in the breast of every man. This rule is easy to be understood, and ready to be applied upon every occasion. The meanest of them may learn and practise it, and the highest are bound to obey it. This is that divine and comprehensive rule of justice or righteousness, by which you must regulate all your actions, and give every one their due: *Do to others, as you would have them do to you:* Not as an unreasonable self-love would wish to receive from others, but as your own conscience would think it reasonable others should do to you, as I have explained it at large in a sermon on that text.*

The second thing proposed, was to discover in various instances what those things are which are just, or wherein our righteousness must appear.

Here it is necessary to distinguish justice into that which belongs to magistrates, and that which belongs to private persons.

That which belongs to magistrates is called distributive justice, because it divides and distributes such rewards and punishments as are due to every one, according to the merit or demerit of the person; and this is done either by the law and light of nature, or by the laws of the land in which we dwell. Now in this sort of justice, the general rule of our Saviour, of which we have been speaking, is of excellent and constant use. Let a prince or a magistrate place himself in the room of a subject or inferior, and ask what is equitable and just that his governor should practise towards him, and let that be the measure of his own conduct towards his subjects or inferiors: Let him exercise his authority according to this sacred rule of righteousness.

* See Sermon XXXIII.

But in our separate assemblies we have very little need to speak of the duty of magistrates, or of distributive justice, since there are very few of that rank and order of men among our hearers. We have reason to give hearty thanks to our present governors, who distribute so much justice to us, as to give us the liberty of worshipping God in a manner that differs from theirs.

I apply myself therefore immediately to consider that justice which belongs chiefly to private persons, and which is their duty to practise. This is called commutative justice. This is that equity of dealing, that mutual exchange of benefits, and rendering to every one their due, which is necessary between man and man, in order to the common welfare of each other. This is that justice that is due from every person toward his neighbour, whether he be superior, inferior, or equal: And I think the following instances which I shall mention, will comprehend most of the cases wherein the practice of justice is required:

I. It is just that we honour, reverence, and respect those who are our superiors in any kind; whether parents, masters, magistrates, ministers, or teachers, or whatsoever other character of superiority there be in the natural, the civil, or the religious life; otherwise we do not pay them their due.

Honour and obedience are due to parents. It is the first command of the second table. "*Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land.*" "*Children, obey your parents, for this is right in the Lord.*" Manifest your affectionate duty towards them. Pay all due submission to their commands, and all honourable regard to their advice.

"*Honour the king as supreme,*" and other ministers of justice as subordinate to him, and submit to them in all the just executions of their authority: This is due from subjects to princes.

"*Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, in singleness of heart as unto Christ, with good-will, doing service as to the Lord, and not to men.*" Your faithful, diligent, and cheerful service is their due.

"*Let those that labour in the word and doctrine be counted worthy of double honour;*" that is, of respect and maintenance: It is due to them in the church where they are set as elders, if they rule well. I mention these hints but very briefly, and for the most part in the language of scripture, as instances wherein these characters of superiority demand honour and duty from inferiors.

I grant there may be other obligations to respect and honour our superiors in some of these cases, besides the mere law of justice; but this law of commutative justice that I am now treating of, obliges us to it. The light of nature and scripture both suppose and oblige parents to take care of their children, to advise and instruct, nourish and provide for them; therefore obedience and honour becomes their due. The command of submission given to subjects, supposes and obliges princes and rulers to protect and defend them from all injury. The precept of cheerful and willing obedience given to servants, supposes and obliges *masters to do the same things unto them;* that is, to treat them with good-will, and cheerfully give them their food and clothing, or their wages and hire; *Eph.* vi. 9. Nature and scripture suppose ministers and teachers to be capable and willing to give good advice, counsel, and instruction to those who are younger, or who accept of their preaching; therefore let respect and honour be paid where it is due.

It is the foundation and rule of commutative justice in all these instances, that whilst inferiors are obliged to pay due regards to those that are above them, the superiors are equally obliged to confer those benefits on persons of a lower character, which the law of God, and the light of nature, require; but some of the cases I have mentioned, will fall in naturally under the following particulars:

II. Another instance of commutative justice, is the particular kindness that is due to near relations. This is a very beautiful and a pleasant part of life, where it is well managed; this affectionate and delightful exchange of good turns one for another.

Now that it is due to near relatives, according to the appointment of God, will be made evident in this manner.

God, the great Creator of all things, could have produced all men immediately by his own power, and have made them arise up in several successions of time, without such a propagation or dependance one upon another, if he had pleased; and then there would have been none of these tender and engaging relations of father, son, and brother. But the wise Creator hath ordained otherwise; he hath appointed such methods for the building of families, and continuing mankind in the world, as binds every soul of us by the ties of nature to one another; Acts xvii. 26. *Of one blood hath God made all the nations of the earth.* And those that are nearer a-kin to one another, especially in the same family, as brethren and sisters, ought to look upon themselves under more peculiar and mutual obligations to do kindnesses for each other in the first place, according to their capacity. The obligation lies on each party, because it lies upon the other. My brother is bound to love and help me, therefore it is my duty to help and love my brother: For *a brother is born for adversity;* Prov. xvii. 17. It is the sovereign will of heaven, that there should be such near relations, who should be bound by the law of creation and duty to protect, to support, and assist one another in a time of adversity: This is the design of God the Creator, in the course of his providence, in his subdivision and propagation of all the families of the earth.

And as it is a piece of justice to confer this mutual help which is due to near relations, so there is something of justice too in our distinguishing acts of kindness and assistance, according to difference of necessity, and according to difference of merit. I cannot believe I am bound to love or serve every brother, or every sister, with equal degree of affection and kindness, whatsoever their character be, whether virtuous or vicious: Nor to bestow equal benefits upon them, where there is not equal necessity; this can never be of a divine appointment. And though there is some duty, some kindness, some assistance always due to those that are our near relatives, yet this very rule of justice obliges us to give more respect or love to those that are in themselves more honourable and worthy; and those who merit more at our hands, may reasonably expect it. This will farther appear from the next particular.

III. Another instance of justice is, love to those that love us, and gratitude to those that have done us good. Those that have been serviceable to us in the concerns of our souls, or our bodies, demand kindness from us, and returns of service, according to their benefits, and our capacity.

Let us first take notice of the gratitude that is due for spiritual benefits. The christian Galatians, who were converted from idolatry and heathenism, and reconciled to God by the preaching of St. Paul, had such a powerful and penetrating sense of their obligations to him, that if it were possible, saith the apostle, *I bear you record, ye would*

have plucked out your own eyes, and given them to me; Gal. iv. 15. And when the same apostle writes to Philemon, who was converted to the faith by his ministry, he gently insinuates the obligations he was under; Though I do not think proper to tell thee, saith he, *how thou owest unto me even thine own self;* ver. 19. St. Paul speaks upon this principle in many places of his epistles: 1 Cor. ix. 11. *If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?* And when he gives an account of the contribution which the christians of Macedonia and Achaia made for the poor saints at Jerusalem, he expresses himself thus: *It hath pleased them verily to make this contribution, and their debtors they are. For if the gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things;* because it was from the Jews that the gospel first came forth, and was preached among the gentiles; *Rom.* xv. 27.

There is some sort of gratitude due also to those who by their writings, or more especially by their conversation or instructions, have improved our understandings, and added to our knowledge in things natural or moral, as well as divine. There are some persons in the world, who have advanced their intellectuals in a very sensible manner, by the company of their friends, but they have so much of pride and self reigning in them, that they refuse to acknowledge it: They would fain have the world believe, that it is the rich soil of their own understanding has produced this harvest of itself: They are ambitious and fond to have it thought that their notions are all their own. Though they plumed themselves with borrowed feathers, they are unwilling to confess whence they received them, and pretend they are owing to nature only. But pride is a secret vice, and a cursed spring of injustice in more instances than one, as I shall shew hereafter.

After the benefits bestowed on our souls, we ought to consider what is due to those that have served our bodies, or our natural life. Those that have healed our diseases, that have saved us from imminent dangers and calamities, or present death; those that have fed or clothed us, or supported life when we were poor and destitute: All these deserve particular kinds of remembrance, and due returns of service. Those that have either vindicated our honour, or increased our reputation, and spread our good name in the world, stand entitled also to some agreeable returns of benefit.

Do not let us imagine then, that gratitude is a mere heroic virtue, that we may pay or not pay at our pleasure; for nature dictates it to us, as a piece of strict commutative justice, and equity of dealing between man and man. We may be very properly said to treat our neighbour unjustly, if we refuse to serve him again, who hath first served us, when his distressed circumstances shall require our assistance.

There are some cases indeed wherein the person who is obliged by his neighbour's kindness, cannot possibly make a return equal to the benefit received, without ruining himself and his family, or exposing himself much more than his neighbour did to serve him. There are cases wherein the person who hath obliged us, may overrate his kindness, and undervalue all our acknowledgments: He may require most unreasonable returns, and think he is never sufficiently recompensed. There are cases also wherein the benefactor may repent of his past services, may endeavour to take away the benefit bestowed, may without reason commence a resolute enmity, and do what in him lies to cancel all former obligations: In such circumstances as these, the obligation of gratitude may be diminished, and perhaps may cease altogether. And

though sometimes, in these very cases, there may be high and heavy charges of ingratitude brought by the first benefactor against a person of a very grateful mind; yet these accusations may be utterly unjust in the sight of God, who knoweth and weigheth all circumstances in a righteous balance. But where no such bars are laid in the way, it is evident that the practice of gratitude, and a mutual return of benefits, is but a piece of natural justice. The very *publicans and sinners do good to those that do good to them;* Matt. v. 46. Luke viii. 32.

IV. Another piece of justice is, the payment of the full due to those whom we bargain or deal with, whether the contract be made formally in words, or implied in the nature of things, according to the customs of mankind. And under this head, not only those who buy and sell, who lend and borrow; but all ranks and degrees of mankind, who have any commerce with each other, are included, from the prince upon the throne, to the day-labourer in the high-ways and the hedges.

The very notion of commutative justice implies the giving one good thing in barter or exchange for another. And all commerce amongst men was originally carried on this way, *viz.* the husbandman gave corn, the grazier cattle; the draper gave cloth; the artificers and labourers their skill and work; the prince and rich man gave food and protection; the poor and the subject gave their attendance and service: And thus mankind lived by an exchange of benefits. But when they found many inconveniences arise from this manner of dealing, they contrived another way of exchanges, and that is by money; which by universal agreement is made the common measure of all things in contract: And since that time, skill and labour, attendance and services are exchanged for money, as well as goods and merchandizes. Now herein consists the practice of justice, that every one render to his neighbour that which is due upon the account of any of these benefits or conveniences of life he receives from him.

Let us give the first place to kings and rulers in this discourse, as justice requires. Though the distribution of special rewards and punishments may have something in it of a distinct nature, yet the common protection which they owe all their subjects, and the obedience and tribute which their subjects owe them upon that account, are properly a part of commutative justice. By their oath of magistracy, and by our engagements of allegiance expressed or implied, we bargain with them for protection, and we ought to pay them tribute. They accept of a high and heavy charge, and agree to execute the laws of the land for the good of the people: Therefore not only the purses, but the consciences of the people are under obligations to pay taxes to the magistrate for the support of his governing power, and the maintenance of his honour and authority, that he may the better fulfil the glorious and useful work. This is what the apostle insists upon, and argues in that known place, the xiiith chapter to the Romans: "*Rulers are ordained of God, not for a terror to good works, but to the evil.* The ruler is the *minister of God to thee for good, and he beareth not the sword in vain; he is an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil.* Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, that is, for fear of his anger, but for conscience-sake, as a matter of justice and duty:" And for this cause also pay tribute. And it is to be noted, the apostle puts our duty in this respect upon the foot of justice; ver. 7, *Render therefore to all their dues,* that is, whatsoever things are just, perform to them; render *tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.*

As the payment of tribute and taxes to those who undertake our protection, defence,

and safety, is a necessary duty; so the payment of a salary to a teacher, of wages to a servant, of money or merchandize to a trader, of hire to the workman, are other parts of justice. Let not the labourer that hath reaped down your fields, or wrought in your service, go without his hire, which was a practice the apostle reproached in his days; *James* v. 4. The law of Moses is very strict in this matter; Deut. xxiv. 14, 15, *Thou shalt not oppress a hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or a stranger.* To express it in modern language; whether he be a christian or not, a good man or an evil man, let him have his hire. If he is so poor, that he cannot tell how to provide for himself to answer the necessities of the evening, then see that thou pay him the hire of the day, nor let the sun go down upon it, for he is poor, and sets his heart, or depends upon it. Trespass not upon his poverty by thy withholding his due, so long as may turn to his prejudice: Let not his hire, which is detained by fraud, cry against thee, for the Lord of hosts, the God of justice, will hear the cry of the oppressed.

And not only in the case of a poor labourer, but in every other instance, make conscience of paying that which you have borrowed, or what you owe to your neighbour; and that not only in full measure, but at the appointed time of payment: The time is part of the contract, as well as the money. Do not say, "I intend to be honest, but I will not pay this week, or this month." Do not withhold what is due, and say to thy neighbour, "*Go, and come again, when thou hast it by thee: Withhold not good from him to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.*" This is forbid by the inspired preacher Solomon; *Prov.* iii. 27, 28. Nor is this agreeable to the golden rule of our Saviour, "*Do to others as ye would that others should do unto you.*"

V. Help to our fellow-creatures in cases of great necessity, seems to be another piece of human justice, even though they have never done any thing actually for us. We are bound to defend our neighbour from apparent injury, so far as is consistent with our own safety, and sometimes farther too. It is our duty to direct him in the right way, when he is wandering or uncertain. It is a piece of justice to warn him of approaching danger, and to give him some assistance in case of sudden calamity or distress attending him. When we see his soul, or his body, or his estate, in imminent hazard, we ought to give him notice of it; we should put forth some efforts of kindness for his security, and pluck him as a brand out of the fire. Our own conscience dictates this to us, since we should think it a very reasonable thing to expect the same kindness from our neighbour, when we are found in the like circumstances.

Can we suppose that the law of God should appoint us to lift the ox or the ass of our neighbour out of a pit, or to restore his sheep to him when going astray; *Deut.* xxii. 1. and yet that we are not bound to fulfil the same duty of love towards our neighbour himself? Nay, the command of Moses reaches still farther; Exod. xxiii. 4, *If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again.* How much more should this be practised toward the soul or the body of a fellow-christian!

If the law of justice require us to secure the cattle or possessions of our neighbour, surely then we are obliged to deal as kindly with his reputation and good name, which in some cases is the best part of a man's estate, and is almost as dear to many as their health or life. When we happen therefore into such company as give their tongues a loose to scandal, and we hear our neighbour vilified and reproached, we ought to ward

off the calumny, and to refute the scandal, where we know that our neighbour does not deserve it.

This piece of justice or duty, to assist a suffering neighbour, arises from the social nature of man, who by the law of nature is so far born for a social life, as to come into the world with this claim, and under this sort of obligations; for a naked exposed infant may claim the patronage and protection of every eye that beholds him. And where other circumstances are equal, those who are most capable of affording help, seem to be most obliged. Now if it be a work of human justice to preserve such a helpless piece of human nature from death, surely every infant grown up to any degrees of capacity and manhood, ought in like manner to esteem himself obliged to afford some assistance to his fellow-creatures, according to their distress, and his capacity well considered and adjusted.

Therefore, my assistance or relief of an injured or perishing creature, is a sort of duty to mankind, though the person himself be an utter stranger to me: The history of the good Samaritan in the gospel tells me, that in such a case every man is my neighbour, though he be of a different nation, sect, or party. But when men are fellow-subjects, or fellow-citizens, or combined in any natural, civil, or religious society, this rule of justice appears with more force and evidence; it strikes a brighter light upon the conscience, and ought to have more power upon the heart and practice: for combination into society is an implicit contract or promise of mutual help under necessity.

I confess, several of the instances which I have mentioned under this fifth head, may be referred also to charity and mercy, of which I shall speak hereafter; but for as much as the light of nature and the law of God require these beneficial actions of men toward each other, I have here placed them under the head of justice.

VI. The last piece of justice which I shall mention, is reparation to those whom we have wilfully injured, as far as possible: And this is a certain duty, whether we have done them injury in their souls, in their bodies, in their estates, or in their reputation.

If we have led them into errors or heresy by our conversation; if we tempted them to sin by our allurement or example; if we have solicited their assistance in any base or guilty practices of our own; we ought seriously to employ our best powers and prayers toward their recovery from the snare of the devil: If we have wilfully injured their health; if we have blasted their credit; if we have thrown a blot upon their good name; if we have defrauded them of any part of their due, or wasted their substance, let us know and consider that the law of justice requires us to make what restitution we are capable of: But still it must be done in such a manner as must consist with our duty to the rest of our fellow-creatures round about us. It is a vain thing to pretend to be sorry and repent that we have done our neighbour a wilful injury, or to flatter him with idle compliments of asking his pardon, while it lies in our power to repair the damage he sustains in a way of consistence with our other duties, and yet we obstinately refuse it: Such a repentance as this cannot be sincere in the sight of God, nor have we any reason to hope that his justice or mercy will condescend to accept it.

We have heard these various instances of justice, this large and particular account of what is due to our neighbour, in the manifold relations and businesses of life. I grant there are several difficulties that may attend some of these instances in the particular practice of them, by reason of the infinite variety of circumstances which may surround our actions, and the unforeseen occurrences of human life. The strictest rules of equity

or justice, in some cases, require a mitigation; and it is impossible to say before-hand what shall be precisely and exactly due to our neighbour in every new accident or occurrence. But a sincere love of justice wrought deep into the heart, and a sacred regard to the golden rule of equity which Christ hath given us, will lead us through most of these perplexities into the paths of righteousness and truth.

It is time now to have the question put close to conscience; "Has this been the manner of our life? Has this been our conduct towards our fellow-creatures? Are we children, and have we paid all due honour and obedience to our parents? Has the father no cause to complain that we have disobeyed his authority? Has the mother no reason to say, that we have scorned her advice, or abused her tenderness and compassion? Are we servants, have we never wasted the goods of our master, nor spent that time in idle company, in folly, or in sin, which should have been employed in his service? Have we dealt with our relatives in the same family as becomes a brother, a sister, or a near kinsman, and fulfilled the duties to which we were born? Do we never neglect to make due acknowledgments for favours received? Have we loved those that love us, and practised the law of justice and gratitude to those who have rescued our souls and bodies from distress and danger, or laid obligations upon us by peculiar benefits?

Am I a trader, and do I practise strict justice and truth, in all that I buy, and in all that I sell? Have I been carefully solicitous to wrong no man, to defraud no man, to cheat and cozen no man? Do I hate the arts of falsehood and knavery? Have I paid the full due to all that I deal with, and do I keep the proper time of payment, which contract or custom have appointed? Have I defended my neighbour from injury, and assisted him in the day of his distress, as I myself should reasonably hope for his defence and assistance? Have I sought to rescue his good name from reproach and slander, when it has been attacked? Or have I rather fallen in with slanderers, and joined in the wilful scandal? Have I honestly sought to make restitution to another, where I have been guilty of wilful injury, and done what in me lies to repair the damage that my injustice has brought upon him? Have I attempted to repair his losses, so far as is consistent with the duties of my other relations in life?"

Where is the person that can lay his hand upon his heart, and say, I am guiltless before God in all this? Who can wash his hands in innocency, and pronounce himself righteous? Surely, such a discourse as this is, should awaken conscience to sensible acts of repentance and mourning; we should be willing and ready to yield to the conviction, where the word of God fastens the charge upon us, and lay ourselves low before the throne of a righteous God. "*Blessed Lord God, if thou art strict to mark iniquities, who can stand before thee? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.* We have failed in many instances of duty toward our fellow-creatures, as well as toward thee our Creator: We have neither given to God nor to our neighbour the full due of love which thy righteous law requires: We lie in the dust before thee, and betake ourselves to the refuge that is set before us: Jesus the righteous is our hope, he not only paid to God and man all their due, in the course of his holy life, but he also restored that honour to thy justice by his death, which we had taken away by our unrighteousnesses. O may every soul of us be forgiven for his sake, and created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works!" *Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMON XXIV.

CHRISTIAN MORALITY, viz. JUSTICE AND EQUITY.

I.

COME, let us search our ways, and try,
Have they been just and right?
Is the great rule of equity
Our practice and delight?

II.

What we would have our neighbour do,
Have we still done the same?
And ne'er delay'd to pay his due,
Nor injur'd his good name?

III.

Do we relieve the poor distress'd?
Nor give our tongues a loose,
To make their names our scorn and jest,
Nor treat them with abuse?

IV.

Have we not found our envy grow,
To hear another's praise?
Nor robb'd him of his honour due,
By sly malicious ways?

V.

In all we sell, and all we buy,
Is justice our design?
Do we remember God is nigh?
And fear the wrath divine?

VI.

In vain we talk of Jesus' blood,
And boast his name in vain,
If we can slight the laws of God,
And prove unjust to men.

SERMON XXV.

CHRISTIAN MORALITY, viz. JUSTICE, &c.

PHILIP. iv. 8.

WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE JUST, &c.—THINK ON THESE THINGS.

IF a bare proposal of the rule of duty, and the mention of the various instances of it, were sufficient to persuade mankind to the practice; then I need not prolong my discourse on this subject of honesty and justice: For I have already proposed the sacred rule which our Saviour has given us, Do to others as ye would that others should do to you; and I have described the several instances wherein this rule must direct our conduct, that we may be just and righteous in all our dealings amongst men.

But alas! our natures are so corrupt, our consciences are so unwilling to receive the laws of duty, and our perverse wills and passions have so much reluctance to the practice, that we have need of arguments to enforce it upon conscience, we have need of powerful motives to awaken our souls to righteousness; and it is necessary therefore that I proceed to the third head of discourse which I proposed, and that is to shew how far the light of nature dictates to us the duty of common justice, and what arguments may be drawn from thence to influence men to be honest.

I. If we consider the natural right that every man hath to keep that which belongs to him, it will appear that this is the gift of God as the God of nature. God, the common author of all our beings, requires that this right be held sacred and inviolable.

I shall not run back to ancient ages, to trace the original grounds of property, or how men became entitled to any of their possessions: It is sufficient for me, that every man is born into this world with a right to his life, to his limbs, to his liberty and safety, and to the good things of this world which he possesses according to the laws of nature, and of the nation where he is born. He has a right also that these should be secure from the hands of injustice and violence, unless he himself be some way concerned in the practice of injury to his fellow-creatures. That man therefore who offers injustice or violence to his neighbour in his body, or his soul, or estate, he robs him of his natural right which God hath given him, and which the law of nature secures to him: He sins against the God of nature, the common Father of mankind; and his conscience hath reason to expect that the God of nature, who is just and righteous, will avenge the mischief done to his injured creatures.

Let it be always observed and excepted here, that the great God himself, considered merely as the God of nature, and where he has not bound himself by promise, reserves a right to resume what he has given, and especially when his creatures have made a forfeiture of their blessings by sinning against their Maker: But this does not authorize men to deprive one another of their possessions, unless he has appointed them from heaven the executioners of his vengeance, by a most evident and infallible commission

particularly given by God himself; as in the case of the Israelites spoiling the Egyptians of their borrowed jewels, and depriving the Canaanites of their lands and their lives: But I know not any instance of that kind ever since.

II. If we consider the need that every man stands in of the help of his fellow-creatures, justice and honesty will appear to be a natural duty of the social life: And God, as he is the governor of the world, will take vengeance of any neglect or violation of this duty, either in this world, or in the other.

Commutative justice, as it is described in the former discourse, is built upon this foundation, that one man has need of another's assistance. Nor is there any the meanest figure amongst mankind so very worthless, useless, and contemptible, but he may be capable of doing us some service either now or hereafter. It is possible we may be in such circumstances, as to stand in need of the help of the meanest, as well as of the mighty; and therefore the duty of social life obliges us to practise the rules of justice toward all. The rich stand in need of the poor to perform the meaner offices for their convenience, as much as the poor stand in need of the rich to supply them with food or money. The master has need of the servant to assist and obey him, as well as the servant stands in need of maintenance or wages from the hands of his master. One man can never procure for himself all the necessaries, and all the conveniencies of life; it is indeed impossible. The same man cannot sow his own corn, reap his own harvest, keep his own sheep, make his own bread, form all his own garments, build his own house, fashion his own furniture, and secure his own possessions; no man can provide for himself in all respects, without the assistance of his fellow-creatures. Now those from whom he expects to receive help in any of these instances, it is necessary he should give them help in other instances wherein they stand in need of his. This is one foundation of justice between man and man; that so every man may have the necessaries and conveniences of life by his neighbour's assistance. Thus *the king himself*, as Solomon says, *is served by the field;* Eccl. v. 9. The prince stands in need of the ploughman; The ploughman gives food to the prince, and the prince gives to the ploughman protection and safety.

I might run through the various instances wherein justice is to be practised, and shew how the higher and lower orders and characters of men have mutual need of each other: The buyer and the seller, the artificer and the merchant, the teacher and the scholar; and thus I might make it appear, that unless a due exchange of benefits be maintained, and the practice of justice secured, none of us could enjoy the safety, the ease, or the conveniences of life.

Where there is no practice of justice amongst men, no man can live safe by his neighbour: Every one that is mighty and malicious, that is proud or covetous, that is envious or knavish, would rob another of his due, and either assume the possessions of his neighbour to himself, or make havock of them, and destroy them. There would be everlasting confusion amongst men, slander and theft, cheating and knavery, plunder and slaughter, and bloody violence, would reign among all the tribes of mankind, if justice were banished from the earth: For neither life, nor liberty, nor peace, nor any of our possessions, nor our good name, can be secured without it. Therefore the light and law of nature sets a sacred guard upon justice, and has written the necessity of it in the consciences of all men, who have not seared those consciences as with a red-hot iron, and rased out so much of human nature from their souls.

The practice of justice has so extensive an influence into the whole conduct of our lives, and the welfare of mankind, that some of the heathen writers have made it to be comprehensive of all virtues.

But because sinful men are ready to break the bonds of commutative justice, and invade the property, the peace, or the life of their neighbours, therefore government is appointed, and magistrates are ordained, to maintain peace and equity amongst men, and to punish the breakers of it. This is the greatest reason why there must be such a thing as magistracy and distributive justice amongst mankind; that those who commit outrage upon their neighbours, and practise injustice toward them, may be punished by the laws: For, as the apostle says to Timothy, *the law is not made for the righteous, but for the disobedient, for the ungodly, and for sinners; for murderers, stealers, and liars*, &c. That it may be a strong restraint upon the violent inclinations of men, and bring just vengeance upon them, when they bring injury upon their neighbours. Therefore it is for the welfare of the innocent and the righteous, that the laws have ordained vengeance for the guilty; that those who would not injure their fellow-creatures, may be guarded in the enjoyment of their own property and their peace, and may have them secured from the sons of injustice.

And besides all the punishment that such sinners justly receive from men on earth, God, the great Governor of the world, has often revealed his wrath from heaven against all the unrighteousness of men, as well as their ungodliness. He has hereby proclaimed his public approbation of justice, and his hatred of all iniquity. His terrors have sometimes appeared in signal and severe instances against those who have been notoriously unrighteous, and who have broken all the rules of equity in the treatment of their fellow-creatures. This the heathens themselves have taken notice of. And they thought this to be so necessary for the government of the world, that their priests have invented a sort of goddess called Nemesis, whose office is to avenge the practice of fraud or violence, and to bring down curses on the head of this kind of criminals.

As the ancient records of the heathen world give us some histories of divine vengeance, so the Bible abounds with more awful and illustrious instances of this kind; which leads me to

The fourth head of my discourse; and that is, to consider what forcible arguments and motives the christian religion affords for the practice of justice among men.

If I were to speak of distributive justice, or that which belongs to the practice of the magistrate, never was it more gloriously manifest, than in and by God the Father, when he refused to pass by our iniquities without punishment, and laid the dreadful weight of it upon the head and soul of his own Son. Never could magistracy receive such a glory, as when our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, hung and died upon the cross, suffering the penalty that the law of God, the supreme magistrate, had denounced against sinners.

And as punishing justice was glorified in all its terrors, so rewarding justice also appeared most illustrious. Because our Lord Jesus Christ had fulfilled obedience not only to the broken law which we lay under, but to those peculiar laws which God the Father also gave him as a Mediator; therefore it pleased God highly to advance him, according to his own eternal covenant. God rewarded him, as a magistrate, distributing justice to a person who had done the greatest things for the honour of his sovereign: He

exalted him at his own right-hand, and gave him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow; for he deserved it at the hands of his Father, and his Father distributed rewards equal to his desert.

Rewarding justice again appears glorious, in that God the Father communicates unto us the rewards of the sufferings of his own Son. God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, because *the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son*, has paid for all our follies, and unrighteousness; 1 *John* i. 9. Faithful and just to his Son, that he may not go without the rewards of his sufferings: Faithful and just to us, because it was in our name and stead that the Son suffered. But not to insist upon this longer, commutative justice is abundantly enforced also by many considerations drawn from the books of the Old Testament, as well as from the gospel of Christ.

If we consult the moral statutes of God, which were given to the Jews, we shall find them full of righteousness. These statutes are of everlasting force, and their divine solemnity should impress our consciences. "*That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live and inherit the land: And the judges and officers shall judge the people with righteous judgment, and shall shew no respect to persons, nor take a gift to pervert justice*; Deut. xvi. 18, 19, 20. *Ye shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another. Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, nor rob him. The wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning. Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in weight, or in measure. Just balances and just weights shall ye have; I am the Lord your God;* Lev. xix. 12, &c. *A false balance is an abomination to the Lord; but a just weight is his delight;* Prov. xi. 1. *To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice;* Prov. iii. 15. *Woe to him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong, who uses his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work;* Jer. xxii. 13. *Remove not the ancient land-marks, nor enter into the field of the fatherless; for their Redeemer is mighty, and he shall plead their cause with thee,*" Prov. xxiii. 10, 11.

If we review the records of the Jewish history, we shall find the cruel and the covetous, the tyrant and the oppressor, made terrible examples of the vengeance of God against unrighteousness. Survey the plagues of Egypt, and the dreadful desolations of that fruitful country, with the destruction of the first-born by the midnight pestilence, and the armies of Pharaoh drowned in the Red Sea, and you may read there the wrath of God against the unrighteousness of men, written in dreadful characters. They treated the race of Israel with cruelty and sore oppression; they destroyed their male-children, and provoked God to bring swift destruction upon themselves. Behold Adonibezek, king of the Canaanites, with his thumbs and his great toes cut off by Joshua, and confessing the justice of the great God. "*Threescore and ten kings*, said he, *with their great toes and their thumbs cut off, have gathered their meat under my table: As I have done, so God hath requited me;*" Judges i. 7. *See the dogs licking up the blood of Ahab in the place where he slew Naboth the Jezreelite*, in order to take unjust possession of his vineyard; 1 *Kings* xxi. 19. These things, which were written of old time, remain upon record for our instruction in the days of christianity.

But let us take more special notice what influences may be derived from the gospel, and from the name of Christ, to enforce the practice of justice among men.

I. If we look to our Lord Jesus Christ as a law-giver, how various and how plain

are his solemn and repeated commands, not only in his sermon upon the mount, but upon other occasions too, that justice be practised between man and man. He hath explained to us that glorious rule of equity, on purpose to make the practice of justice easy, plain, and universal, "*Love your neighbour as yourself;* that is, do to others, as ye would that others do to you."

We cannot but think that the holy soul of our Lord Jesus was concerned to secure the practice of justice and righteousness among his followers, when we read his terrible rebuke to the pharisees for the neglect of it, and a curse pronounced upon them; Matt. xxiii. 23. *Woe unto you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites; for ye pay tythe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.* Judgment in that place may signify commutative and distributive justice; all manner of exercise of righteousness towards their fellow-creatures. Under a pretence of serving God better than your neighbours, and crowding his temple with your presence, and his altar with sacrifices and gifts, ye abandon common justice, ye neglect the righteousness due to your fellow-creatures. There is a woe denounced upon you, and my Father will inflict the curse, for *he hates robbery for burnt offering;* Isaiah lxi. 8. Nor will the God of heaven excuse you from paying your dues to men on earth, under pretence of paying honours or sacrifices to him.

There are many other threatenings in the New Testament written against those that neglect justice, and pronounced by the apostles in the name and authority of Christ, their exalted Lord. The covetous and extortioners, those that take away the right of their fellow-creatures, are shut out from the heavenly blessedness; 1 Cor. vi. 10. "*Know ye not,* says the apostle, *that none of these shall inherit the kingdom of God?*" As much as to say, it is so very obvious a thing, that an unjust man can never enter into heaven, whatsoever pretence he makes, that I may appeal to the meanest capacity, ye all know it. God will repay vengeance to them that do wrong to their neighbours, whether they be great or mean, for *there is no respect of persons with him;* Col. iii. 25.

II. Consider Christ as a pattern of justice and righteousness. Look to the example of our Lord Jesus; you see him, who was the sovereign Magistrate and Lord of all, who could distribute crowns and kingdoms to men, submitting himself to commutative justice among creatures.

Behold the Son of God, who was the brightness of his Father's glory, and the delight of his soul before the creation; behold him stooping down to our world, and taking flesh and blood upon him to become our brother, that he might shew us how we ought to love our brethren. It was an unparalleled instance of divine love that Christ has given us, when he came down from heaven to become our neighbour, and to dwell amongst us, that he might teach us to love our neighbours as ourselves.

Behold the glorious Son of God subjecting himself to his earthly parents, to Joseph the carpenter, and to Mary his mother, that he might instruct us how to pay obedience to our superior relations. See how the King of kings pays tribute to Cæsar, when he was so poor, that he was forced to send Peter a fishing, to procure the tribute-money by a miracle. And though the beasts of the field were his, and he could have commanded the cattle upon a thousand hills, to make provision for his followers; yet he would not dispossess the owners of them, but created food on purpose to feed four and five thousand in the wilderness.

III. If we consider Christ as a glorious benefactor, who has taken care to provide

for us the necessaries of this life, and hath purchased for us, at the hands of God, the eternal treasures of heaven and glory. Has not this blessed consideration force enough to guard us against all temptations to injustice? Shall a christian break the rules of equity, and steal, or cheat, or plunder his neighbour to gain money or merchandize, who has the promises of God for his support in a way of diligence and humble faith? Shall we sully our consciences, and defile our souls with knavery and injustice for a little of the pelf of this world, when we have the unsearchable riches of Christ made over to us in the gospel, and the inheritance of heaven in reversion?

IV. Let us consider the very nature and design of the gospel of Christ, it is to make sinners holy, to make the unjust righteous: The new man of christianity must be created in righteousness and true holiness. Therefore are we *purchased with the blood of Christ, that we might be a peculiar people, zealous of good works;* Tit. ii. 14.

It is a shame and scandal to the christian name, when one who wears it is unrighteous or dishonest. An unjust christian, what a contradiction is it in itself, and how it disgraces the profession of the gospel! Hear how the great apostle treats his Corinthian disciples when such sort of sins were found amongst them; 1 Cor. vi. 1—8. "*Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust man and the infidel. Dare any of you injure your neighbour, your fellow-christian? I speak this to your shame. Brother goes to law with brother, and ye injure one another. Why do not you rather suffer wrong? nay, you do wrong, and defraud, and that your own brethren.*" But what is the consequence? Such wretches as these are, "*shall never inherit the kingdom of God.*"

"*The grace of God that bringeth salvation,* Tit. ii. 9, 10. *teacheth us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly and righteously,* and religiously, *in this present evil world.*" It teacheth us righteousness towards men, as well as sobriety among ourselves, and godliness towards the King of heaven. But how hath this divine religion been scandalized for want of justice in the professors of it! Scandalized among heathen kingdoms, among Turks and unbelievers! And christianity in our own land, how hath it been dishonoured by the practices of those that pretend to that holy name! How hath the conversion of wild heathens in the Indian nations been hindered by the injustice and fraud of christian merchants and traders there, or by merchants who call themselves christians. I have heard it said by persons whom I could fully credit, that a Turk when he is suspected of fraud and cheating, will reply, "What, do you think I am a christian?" O how hath the gospel of the lovely Jesus been rendered odious by the abominable practices of those that pretend to honour him! What falsehood, what lying, what perjury, and cheating, and deceit, and violence have been practised by our traders in foreign lands! Thus there has been an ill savour of our holy christianity carried beyond the seas, by those, perhaps, who have pretended to convert the infidels. And many in our own nation, who have begun to set their faces towards heaven, have been sorely disgusted at the knavish practices of professors, and been tempted to think that all religion is a jest, and to abandon the ordinances of the gospel. But when souls stumble and fall, and perish by such discouragements, woe to him that gave the offence, and laid this stumbling-block of iniquity in their way. How heavy must the blood of souls lay upon such sinners!

Surely there has been enough said on this head to discourage oppression, deceit, and injustice in the professors of christianity, if argument, and shame, and terror can have

power and prevalence over sin and temptation. O may almighty grace attend this discourse of justice, and work the sacred love of it in the hearts of men!

Now if ye are made willing to walk by the rules of equity and justice, instead of proposing particular directions for this end, I shall proceed,

In the fifth and last place, to point out the various springs of injustice, that ye may avoid them.

The great and general spring of injustice to our neighbour is a criminal and excessive love to ourselves. For since the comprehensive notion of justice lies in this, to give to every one that which is due, it follows, that the general notion of injustice consists in taking to ourselves more than is due, or in giving less than is due to our neighbour.

There are a thousand instances of this unrighteousness among men, in reference to their bodies, their souls, their good name, or their possessions in the world. This general term of injustice is so extensive, that it includes a great part of the sins forbidden in the second table. Disobedience to parents and governors, rebellion, treason, murder, adultery, theft, violence, and plunder, cheating, and deceit, and slander, with all sinful desires to possess what belongs to our neighbour, may be justly ranked under the head of unrighteousness: And they spring from this one fountain, *namely*, an excessive regard to self. It is to this natural and exalted idol that we sacrifice the peace and the property, the good name, and even the life of our fellow-creatures. Nor will any method be effectual to secure us from the practice of injustice, till we learn to degrade self a little in our own esteem, and to judge of our neighbour, and of the things that are his due, by the same rule and measure by which we take an estimate of ourselves, and of what is due to us. Let us put our neighbour in the place of self, and judge how he ought to be treated.

But that we may more effectually guard ourselves from the temptations of injustice, let us descend to particulars, and we shall find that almost all the unrighteous practices of men spring from some of these six principles; *viz.* covetousness, pride, luxury, sloth, malice against men, or distrust of God.

I. Covetousness is a great spring of injustice. This consists in an immoderate desire of possessing: And we are told by the apostle, that the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some have coveted after, they have not only erred from the faith, but they have ventured upon many sins, as well as pierced themselves through with many sorrows. For *they that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition;* 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. Solomon is of the same mind; *Prov.* xxviii. 20, 22. He that maketh haste to be rich, shall not be innocent, for he hath an evil eye upon the possessions of his neighbour.

It is from this cursed root of covetousness that a multitude of bitter fruits proceed. It is by this vicious principle working within us, that we are tempted to take what is not our due, either by craft or by violence. Hence it is that men cheat each other in their daily commerce, they defraud and over-reach their neighbour, if they can, in every bargain they make, and try all the arts of subtle knavery, in order to enrich themselves. They divest their souls of truth and virtue, and put off conscience and shame to load themselves with thick clay.

It is covetousness that teaches the sons of men to practise upon their dealers with a false balance and a deceitful beam. They shorten their measures, and lessen their

weights by which they sell their goods: But when the case alters, and they buy any thing for themselves, they will, if possible, take another sort of weight, or use a different measure; all which are an abomination to the Lord.

It is the same evil and unrighteous principle that persuades the seller to put off corrupt and damaged wares for good and sound, and to cozen his neighbour with merchandize that is by no means such as he reasonably expects. It is this principle that persuades the buyer also to cheat his neighbour with corrupt and false money, which he knows to be unlawful coin. For corrupt merchandize and corrupt money, false balances, light weights, and scanty measure, seem all to stand in the same rank of deceit: These are all weapons of craft and knavery to give a secret wound to their neighbour's estate, they all belong to the armory of fraud, and the magazine of unrighteousness.

It is this covetous humour that tempts the tongues of men to speak flattering falsehoods in their daily dealings, and some of them make an hourly sacrifice of truth to the gain of a penny. It is from this principle that they break their promises of payment: they with-hold the money that is due to their neighbour, beyond all reasonable time, and that for no other reason but to gain by the loan of it: They delay the payment of their poor creditors for many months, or perhaps for years, and put the advantage which they make of this delay into their own purse. This is a frequent, but an unrighteous practice in our day: For the profit that accrues by the detaining of money that is due to another beyond the customary or contracted time of payment, should doubtless be given to the person to whom the principal money was due; or at least he should have such a valuable share of it as may compensate the damage or loss he sustains by the delay.

It is a covetous desire of gain that tempts men to practise extortion, and to prey upon the necessities of those they deal with. When the buyer wants any conveniency of life, they force him to give much more than it is worth, because he stands in the utmost need of it: Or they constrain the seller perhaps to part with some of his most valuable possessions for a trifle, because he is under special necessity and present distress. This was the extortion which Jacob practised upon his brother Esau, when he made him sell his birth-right for a mess of pottage, while he was faint with hunting. And it is the same iniquity when we impose upon the ignorance or known unskilfulness of the persons we deal with; and especially when we make our advantage of children or servants, or of persons who confess their own ignorance, and leave the choice of the goods, or the determination of the price, to the conscience of him that sells.

We may indeed set a just value upon our own goods; but we must not set a price upon any man's pressing necessity, nor raise a tax upon his ignorance. It can never be certainly determined how much it is lawful for a trader to get by his merchandize: Doubtless he may sometimes make a greater gain of the same things than at another: And this is often necessary, in order to compensate the losses, the risks or dangers that he passes through. He may lawfully make those advantages which the change of things, and the divine providence often puts into his hands: Nor is it unlawful for him to take more of some persons than he does of others for the same merchandize; for he may treat some of his customers favourably, though he must deal righteously and justly with them all. But let him see to it that he use ingenuity towards the poor, the necessitous, and the unskilful, as well as moderation toward all men. The circumstances of things are so various, that much of the practice of justice must be left to the court of equity in every man's breast, under the sacred influence of this rule. *Do that to others which*

you think reasonable that others should do to you. It is best in all doubtful and difficult cases to practise what is fair and honourable in the sight of men, and what is safe and innocent in the sight of God; for a good conscience is better than the largest gain: But where the sacred principles of virtue are over-borne by corrupt inclinations, the moral powers of the soul are stretched at first to the lengths of moderate iniquity, and conscience is strained to the indulgence of some smaller unrighteousness; but virtue will die by degrees, and conscience will learn in time to allow bolder injustice. And then, though it may be stupified and senseless for a season, yet let the sinner know, that it will have its feeling return again, and the guilt of knavery and falsehood will torture the soul with unknown agonies here or hereafter.

But the wretched influence of this vice of covetousness is not confined only to traffic and merchandize: It spreads its unrighteousness much farther and wider: It tempts the sons and daughters of men to withhold due honour and necessary supplies from their aged parents, and exposes to great hardships in the latter end of life, those to whom we owe our life itself, and the comforts of it in our younger years. It withholds wages from the servant, and salary from him that has earned it. It forbids those who have received benefits to make a grateful return to their benefactors. It will teach a man to stop his ears at the cry of his neighbour in distress, lest it should cost some money for his relief. It refuses an alms to the starving poor, and finds an excuse for the churl, lest he stretch out his hand of bounty to a perishing family. It is so wrapped up in self, that it never considers what is due to another; and ventures to break all the rules of righteousness, rather than diminish its own estate, or part with any thing it can call MINE. It would suffer a church or a kingdom to sink and perish, and let the public peace be broken, and the nation dissolved, if it might but secure itself and its own possessions in the midst of those ruins: An accursed vice; an iniquity big with misery and desolation! Yet it hides itself too often from conviction and reproof; it runs like a river under ground, and attempts to conceal itself under the specious disguises of frugality and virtue, while it practises all the mischiefs we have been describing.

II. Pride is another spring of injustice. But having broken up the fountain of covetousness as of a great deep, and traced it in its various streams, the labour of drying them up has employed so much time, that the pursuit of the other springs of unrighteousness must be delayed till a further season.

HYMN FOR SERMON XXV.

CHRISTIAN MORALITY, viz. JUSTICE AND TRUTH.

I.

GREAT God, thy holy law requires
To curb our covetous desires,
Forbids to plunder, steal or cheat,
To practise falsehood or deceit.

II.

Thy Son hath set a pattern too,
He paid to God and men their due:
A dreadful debt he paid to God,
And bought our pardon with his blood.

III.

Amazing justice! boundless love!
Do we not feel our passions move?
Do we not grieve that we have been
Faithless to God, or false to men?

IV.

Have we no righteous debt denied,
Through wanton luxury or pride?
Nor vex'd the poor with long delay,
And made them groan for want of pay?

V.

Have we ne'er thrown a needless shame,
Or scandal on our neighbour's name?
O happy men, whose age and youth
Have ever dealt in love and truth.

VI.

But if our justice once be gone,
And leave our faith and hope alone;
If honesty be banish'd hence,
Religion is a vain pretence.

SERMON XXVI.

CHRISTIAN MORALITY, viz. JUSTICE, &c.

PHILIP. iv. 8.

WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE JUST, WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE PURE, — THINK ON THESE THINGS.

Ὅσα δίκαια, ὅσα ἁγνὰ.

JUSTICE and truth are two of the chief bands that preserve human society. If truth and justice perish from the earth, the sons of men would become like the savages of the wilderness, where the strong or the crafty animals prey upon *the weak, the simple, and the innocent.* The Lord God, the author of nature, is a God of justice, and he has written something of this law in the consciences of men. But the God of grace has given us much plainer rules for the practice of it, hath allured us to righteousness by sweeter motives, and hath guarded it with more awful and solemn terrors. These things have been the subject of the former discourse; and that we may, as far as possible, assist towards the rooting out injustice from the hearts and lives of christians, I have begun to point out some of the chief principles, or springs of it.

The first which I mentioned is covetousness, a vicious weed that grows in corrupt nature, and is fruitful of a thousand unrighteous actions.

I proceed now to the second, that is pride. When a person sets too high a value upon himself, and aggrandizes himself in his own esteem, he is ready to imagine that all things are due to him, and there is very little left to become due to his neighbour. The proud, as well as the covetous man, is full of self, and he forgets the command of love to his neighbour: He treats him as if he was not made of the same clay, and lives as though he were obliged to no duty to his fellow-creatures. This is evident in a variety of instances.

It is pride that forbids us to give due respect to those that are above us in the family, in the church, or in the civil state: And instead of paying the honours that are due to superiors, we are tempted to treat them with insolence and scorn. Many a father, in our degenerate age, has found this unhappy effect of raising his children too soon and too high: And the mother has seen her sin, and felt it in her punishment, when she has cockered up her young offspring in pride, and thereby taught them to break the rules of justice, to slight all her authority, and make a scoff of that pre-eminence which God and nature have given her. The proud man is ready to say in his heart, "All that are around me ought to pay me respect, and do me justice," while he is regardless of the respect due to others. "Let them carry it towards me as they ought, and I will carry it toward them as I please."

It is pride that inclines us to throw a blot here and there upon the good name of our neighbour, and to blemish his reputation, lest he should outshine us. When some honourable mention is made of another person in our company, especially if it be one of

our own sex, our own rank or degree in the world, do we not feel something rising within to lessen their honour, and to stain their character? It is through this vanity and ambition of mind, that we are tempted to defame and reproach our neighbour, and to rob him of his just honour among men, and we endeavour to build our own fame and credit upon the ruin of his. But it is a sandy, or rather an impious foundation; and the fame that is built upon such ground will never stand. Pride inclines us to assume more respect than is due to ourselves, and to take it away from our neighbour, even as covetousness tempts us to take more money to ourselves than is due, and to deprive our neighbour of it. Thus both of them are opposite to the sacred rule of justice; one to that justice which we owe to our neighbour's estate, and the other to his good name.

But the evil influence of pride spreads farther also; for it teaches us to practise unrighteousness in matters of property: It instructs us in the methods of oppression, and inspires us with a wicked courage to practise it; Psalm lxxiii. 6, 7, 8, "*When pride compasses men as a chain, and they wear it as a golden ornament, then violence covers them as a garment, and though their eyes stand out with fatness, and they have more than heart could wish, yet they are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression.*" They gripe those that are poor, because they themselves are mighty. They refuse to pay the just demands of their neighbours, they speak loftily, and stand it out with them against all right and justice, because they are great in the world. It is the rule of justice to change places with our humble neighbour, and ask ourselves, what we should think due to us, if we were in his place. Or at least we should set ourselves and our neighbour upon the level, and consider what is just and right on both sides. But the heart of pride cannot bear such a rule, it exalts itself far above the level of mankind, and practises toward those that are around it with a superior insolence and injustice. Cursed pride, the first-born of hell! It seized our first parents, and tempted them to aim at Godhead, to practise injury to God himself, and assume a right to the fruit of the forbidden tree! Vile iniquity, that hath tainted all the seed of Adam! It is a haughty poison that was infused into our veins with the first sin; and where shall we find the son or daughter of Eve that is not infected with it? Blessed be the grace of God, wheresoever its dominion is broken, so that it does not break out into all the works of unrighteousness!

The third spring of injustice among men, is profuseness and luxury. When persons affect to live in a manner above what their circumstances will afford, they are tempted to intrench upon the property of their neighbour, either by cheating or by violence.

It is the language of luxury, "I must indulge my appetite, my table must be furnished with a costly variety, and I must eat and drink with elegance, as is the modish phrase. I must treat my friends, when they visit me, with fashionable entertainments; I must keep fine company, and make a figure in the world; I must appear in such an equipage as my neighbour allows himself, though he be ten times richer than I am. I must have many changes of raiment, for it is a mean and vulgar thing to appear too often in the same dress: My house must be furnished after the mode, and I must shine at home and abroad, in silks or in silver; for I cannot bear the thought that such or such a one should outshine and overtop me." Then the patrimony is sold or mortgaged to raise present supplies, and the rich food and clothing, and luxurious expences of a twelve-month, devour and swallow up seven years income, or the gain of half their lives.

What remains then, when their own substance is not sufficient to supply their vanity, but that they make an inroad upon the property of their neighbour? They run deep

into debt with the artificer and trader, and they never concern themselves how to make payment. The workman has built them palaces, instead of such common dwellings as their character requires, and the artificers of various kinds have furnished out their bravery of apparel or equipage: But the unhappy creditors are ready to starve in tattered raiment, through the oppression and injustice of their luxurious neighbour. And when they make a modest demand of what is due to them, they meet with nothing but a frown or a jest, and the reproachful names of saucy and impertinent. But, "*woe to him that covets an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high;—for the stone shall cry out of the wall against the oppressor: The beam out of the timber shall answer it, and shall bear witness against unrighteousness;*" Hab. ii. 9, 11.

This is the crying guilt of many, and very commonly practised in this city, in greater or in less degrees; but perhaps the profuse wretch pursues a bolder course of injustice, and betakes himself to robbery and plunder: He lies at watch on the highways, he seizes and assaults the innocent traveller, and deprives him of his wealth and every thing valuable, in order to support his own wild and extravagant expences. Luxury must be fed, though justice be starved; and luxury must be clothed, though justice go naked.

My hearers perhaps will think themselves unconcerned in all this story, and take no share of the conviction to themselves, nor do I know any of them to whom half this charge belongs. But let it be considered, that men do not usually rise to this degree of madness all at once. Unrighteousness has several steps and stages in its race; if we indulge our appetites, and spread our tables, or form our apparel or our furniture but a little beyond our income, if we once begin to admit such a manner of life and expence as exceeds our estate, in order to please our own sensual or vain inclinations, or to vie with our neighbours, we expose ourselves to most evident temptations of injustice, and lead our souls into sinful snares. "We cannot live frugal as our fathers did: The fashion is altered, and we must follow it, whether the purse can bear it or no."

Hence arise the impetuous desires of hasty and extravagant gains by gaming, in order to recover what is lost by luxury. Men venture largely upon the turn of a dye, and defraud their honest creditors of their bread and life, to pay, what they call in their cant, the debts of honour. A wanton sort of justice and illegal equity! It is the luxurious fashion of life that hath filled our land with the itch of gaming; and if the turn of a wheel can intitle them to thousands, they despise the slow and tedious ways of supplying their wants by labour, business, or traffic. Thus honest industry is discouraged, and trade, which is the political life of our nation, lies groaning and expiring.

Hence proceeds the wicked custom of breaking promises to those that we deal with, and long delays of payment, till we imagine the debt is cancelled, by being almost forgotten. A vain and criminal imagination! As though the daily increase of interest, and the patience of the creditor, could make the principal cease to be due! As though time, and unjust delay, could pay debts without money.

Hence flows the unrighteous practice of borrowing without any design to pay, which is gross and shameful iniquity: I would hope none of the professors of religion have so far abandoned all sense of righteousness. Yet there are too many, who, when once they have borrowed, grow so careless and negligent of payment, that it brings a disgrace upon their profession and a blot upon their character. Profuse and thoughtless sinners, who run in debt to every one that will trust them for the daily conveniences of life!

Though they have no reasonable prospect of paying, yet they ask their neighbour to lend, with a free and courageous countenance, and put a bold face upon their venturous iniquity, being too proud to let their poverty be known. But the God of justice beholds their crime, and writes their names down in his book among the unrighteous. Psalm xxxvii. 21. *The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again.*

Hence it comes to pass that there are so many bankrupts in our days, even among the professors of strict religion: A shameful and an ungodly practice, if it arise from luxury and profuseness, or from a careless neglect of their proper affairs! It was thought sufficient, in the days of our fathers, to deserve an expulsion from the church of Christ, unless they could evidently make it appear, that it was merely by the unforeseen and frowning providences of God, they were reduced to this extremity. There is many a man hath groaned away his latter years in poverty, and perhaps in a cold prison, and in most forlorn circumstances of life, by means of the profuseness of his youth; And he hath been taught to read the guilt of his luxury and injustice in a long and painful lesson.

But a profuse and sensual humour is not only the spring of unrighteousness among persons of better rank and circumstance in the world, but it tempts servants also to be unjust to their masters: They will now and then provide a treat for themselves and their friends; they must eat nicely, and drink to excess: And thus they waste their master's substance. They must keep good company in the world, and now and then spend a licentious hour or two, while their just and reasonable service at home is neglected; and perhaps the purse of the master must pay for all.

Under the same head I may bring a charge of injustice against the careless and wasteful servant, who persuades himself that his master is rich enough, and therefore he is not solicitous to buy or sell, or manage any affairs for him to the best advantage. He permits the goods of his master to be wasted or embezzled, he grows liberal and generous at his master's cost, and has no thought of the golden rule of our Saviour, to manage his master's concerns with the same frugality and conduct, as he would expect a servant should do for him. But it is time I proceed to the next particular.

The fourth occasion of injustice is sloth and idleness. For the "*slothful man is a brother to him that is a great waster;*" Prov. xviii. 9.

Whosoever wants the necessaries, or the conveniences of life, is bound to obtain them by labour and diligence, if he is not possessed of them by any other methods of favourable providence. *In the sweat of thy brows shalt thou eat thy bread,* was the command given to Adam, when he was turned out of paradise, and forfeited his property in the fruits of Eden. But when once a person gets an aversion to business, when he finds a pleasure in sauntering and trifles, and indulges idleness and a lazy life; then he is tempted to seek the supports and comforts of nature by some practices of unrighteousness. *The slothful man will be clothed with rags,* unless he procure better clothing by fraud or violence; *Prov.* xxiii. 21.

Hence it is that persons learn the art of stealing, and possess themselves of the goods or the money of their neighbour by thievery. They mark out the houses in the day, and break them up at midnight for plunder. They remove the ancient land-marks, to enlarge their own borders; they violently take away flocks, and feed upon them. They go forth to their unrighteous work in the morning, and rise betimes for a prey. They reap down the corn in their neighbour's field, and the wicked gather the vintage. They cause the naked to lodge without clothing, and take away the sheaf from the hungry.

These are they that rebel against the light, they abide not in the paths thereof. Though God does not lay folly to them, nor punish their crimes by his immediate judgments, yet his eyes are upon their ways; *Job* xxiv. 2—23. And many times his providence brings their crimes to light, and they are punished for their iniquity by the sentence of the judge. O what a shame and scandal is it, that in a nation professing christianity, there should be such multitudes trained up to the pilfering trade, and educated for infamy, for transportation, and the gibbet!

There are others, whose hands refuse to labour, and whose temper of mind delights in idleness, but they venture not upon these bolder crimes; they learn other unrighteous arts of cheating and falsehood, and fall into the same evil practices, which I have just before described under the head of luxury. But when luxury, pride, and sloth join their forces together, the temptation to injustice becomes exceeding strong, and there are few who have power to resist it. Such was the unjust steward, whom our blessed Saviour represents in a parable, procuring himself a way of living by cheating his Lord; *Luke* xvi. 1, 2, 3, 4. He had wasted his master's goods, and he was to be cashiered from his service. What shall I do, said he, I have not been used to work, I cannot dig; there is the sloth of the man: He had lived well in his stewardship, and was grown proud, to beg I am ashamed. Well, I can purloin no more of my Lord's estate for myself, but I can do it for his debtors; I will cheat him in his accounts, and make all his debtors my friends, by cancelling a good part of their obligations, and then I shall get a livelihood amongst them. O that all such practices had been found no where but in parables!

Some that have been reduced to poverty by idleness, and have borrowed boldly what they could never pay, yet wipe their mouths, and think themselves innocent and righteous, because they have not a sufficiency to make payment: Whereas, in truth, it is their own sloth that makes them poor, and keeps them so. Some of these idle creatures waste their days in drowziness and inactivity. "A little more sleep, a little more slumber, so poverty comes upon them like an armed man without resistance." Others are a little more sprightly, and they spend their hours in an inquisitive impertinence, in public news and private slander, in searching and tattling of the affairs of other persons and their families, while they eat, and drink, and live upon the labour of the diligent, and unjustly serve themselves out of the industry of their neighbour. So the worthless drone wastes the summer's day in buzzing and trifling, he gads abroad and wanders with idle flight; then he returns, and feeds upon the honey that the bee has gathered, and abuses the industry of a better animal.

St. Paul takes notice of this sort of people at Thessalonica, who call themselves christians, and reproves them with just severity; *We hear there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies. Now them that are such, we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread: For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat;* 2 Thess. iii. 10, &c. And in his letter to the Ephesians, he exhorts the thief to diligence. *Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good;* and that not only for his own support, but that he may have to give to him that needeth, *Eph.* iv. 28. How little do those christians read their Bibles! Or how little do they mind what the great apostle tells them! They profess they were never brought up to work, and give

that answer roundly as a sufficient excuse for idleness: and therefore when they become poor and necessitous, they think it the duty of others to maintain them, without stretching out their own hand for any thing but to beg and receive. They will apply themselves to no employment, though they are told their duty continually: Their pride, indolence, and sloth with hold them from labour, though they are called to it daily in the loudest language in which God now-a-days speaks to his creatures; and that is the voice of reason, scripture, and of providence.

But there is another sort of sloth and idleness, that leads on to the practice of injustice too, and that is when men are busy in their trades, and the affairs of life, but seldom look into their accounts, or perhaps keep none at all: And thus they live upon the spend, and are utterly ignorant whether their income will support it. They eat and drink with daily cheerfulness, and sleep sound upon their pillow, while they know not whether their food and raiment, and even the bed they rest on, be their own or no. Perhaps they have let their accounts run long behind, they are a little jealous of their circumstances, and then it is an unpleasant and tedious task to take a thorough review of them. By this means they run on venturing and heedless, till justice overtakes them, and ruin seizes them at once. Then they see what a shameful and cruel inroad they have made upon their neighbour's property: They find then that they have fed and clothed themselves and their household out of their neighbour's estate. What shall I say to persons of this character? Their souls are generally hardened on all sides against conviction, and it is with much difficulty they are ever brought to confess their own folly, their sloth, and unrighteousness. Ask thyself, O man, O woman, ask thyself this short and solemn question, "Am I willing my neighbour should deal thus with me, and spend my substance for his daily support?"

Here let it be observed, that I would always except from this accusation, such as are mere children, and cannot work, or such as are aged, and past all ability of labour, such as are weak and sick, and rendered thereby utterly incapable of working, and such as seek work with honest diligence, and would be glad to be employed in any thing they can do, if they could find others to employ them. Some of these indigent and necessitous persons are in every city, and they seem to be marked out by providence as the proper objects of compassion and bounty, and are not to be blended with the slothful and idle creatures in the general charge of unrighteousness.

Fifthly, The next spring of injustice is malice and envy. This is the vilest of all, and the most like the devil: for it contrives mischief, and brings injury upon others, without seeking gain and advantage to self. This is a vile iniquity, and has a great deal of the spirit of cruelty and of hell in it, where ill-nature and spite reign and triumph.

Though envy and malice awaken and excite the sinner to acts of unrighteousness and violence, and tempt us to rob our neighbour of what is his due; yet these vicious principles aim more frequently to disturb the peace, or health, and good name of our neighbour, than to injure his estate. It is wrath and hatred that boils up the blood into fury and revenge, and moves us to smite our neighbour with the fist of wickedness; nor is the guilty passion allayed till it has practised mischief to his body, or his reputation, or his family, or to something that belongs to him. Hence proceed murders and death, and all the train of evils and injuries of the cruel and bloody kind. It was from this principle that Cain slew Abel his brother, that the sons of Jacob sold Joseph into slavery: It was from this principle that Sanballat and Tobiah joined their rage and their counsels

against the Jews, that they might hinder the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and endeavour to destroy the builders, and throw down the work; *Neh.* ii. 10.

I hope there are no examples of this flagrant injustice to be found among us who profess piety. But are there none of us guilty of some lesser injuries rising from the same principle? Are there none of us that indulge our tongues to backbite and slander, to make our neighbours look odious, or to make ourselves easy or merry? This is to play the *madman, who casts abroad fire-brands, arrows and death,—and saith, Am I not in sport?* Prov. xxvi. 18, 19. Are there none of us that delight to teaze, and vex, and torture our neighbour by disagreeable speeches and sly reproach? Do we never envy and provoke one another, contrary to the apostle's express prohibition? *Gal.* v. 26. Do we not take pleasure to repeat the things that make each other uneasy, in order to vent the gall within us, and scatter the venom upon our neighbour's good name? This is malice and unrighteousness together; a complicated crime, which one would think should be abhorred by every christian, if one did not frequently see and feel the practice of it among the professors of the name of Christ. I might well compare such creatures to a wasp or a hornet, who first tease and disquiet us with their endless humming, and ere we can get rid of them, they fix their painful sting in our flesh; though neither the pain nor the teazing vexation they give us, can procure any conveniency to those peevish insects, those noisy animals of a little angry soul.

If we are poor, this evil humour tempts us to envy the riches of our neighbour, and we magnify and exalt them beyond the truth, that we may give some colour to our splenetic and uneasy carriage. If we are afflicted, or in pain, we envy the welfare and the ease of others, we enlarge our paraphrases upon their blessings, and blacken their character, that they may appear unworthy of such favours, and worthy of our indignation and envy. "When shall the time come, O Lord Jesus, thou king of righteousness, and king of peace, when shall that day appear, that Ephraim *shall not envy Judah, nor Judah molest Ephraim?* When shall it be that no ravenous beast shall come near Zion, and there shall be nothing to hurt or destroy in all thy holy mountain?"

The last spring of injustice that I shall mention, is unbelief, and distrust of the providence of God. When persons are in low circumstances, they are sometimes hurried by the power of this temptation to use sinful means in order to obtain what they want, or at least what they fancy they want for the comfortable support of life. The word of God has many engaging promises in it, to those who are diligent in their duty: Though *the soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing; yet the soul of the diligent shall be made fat;* Prov. xiii. 4. It is the hand of a diligent man that maketh rich, for it hath the blessing of the Lord upon it. God can increase the handful of meal in the barrel, and lengthen out the stream of oil from the little cruse, that the debts of the widow may be paid thereby, and her family find provision; 1 *Kings* xvii. 12, 14. And even since the days of miracles have ceased, there are many christians who have lived by faith, and have found wonders of support, not much inferior to this ancient miracle.

But those who know not the way of living by faith, are too ready to indulge themselves in some little pilfering or cheating methods to procure a subsistence. Thus unbelief has a plain tendency to unrighteousness, but *he that believeth shall not make haste;* Isaiah xxviii. 16. He that believes the care of God toward his own people, and puts his trust in his Redeemer, who is Lord of all things, he that lives upon the covenant of God daily, he shall not make haste to make himself rich, or to possess himself of the comforts

of life by any methods of injustice; his faith and diligence shall be rewarded at least with daily bread.

And now having finished this subject, I must beg pardon of my reader for insisting so largely on those two virtues, justice and truth, in my text. But they are of so divine a necessity to make up the character of a christian, they are of so valuable importance to the glory of the gospel, and so shameful an inroad has been made upon them in various instances in our degenerate age, that I was willing to attempt something to retrieve this part of godliness: And O may the convincing and sanctifying Spirit of God attend it with his sacred influences, that those who are called by the sacred name of christian, may never bring a blemish upon it by deserving the characters of false and unjust!

The Second part of this Sermon.

The next virtue mentioned in my text, is purity; whatsoever things are pure,—think on these things. The sense of this word ἁγνὰ in the Greek, is extended so far by some critics, as to include temperance in eating and drinking, as well as chastity and modesty in all our words and behaviour; and thus it signifies almost the same with sobriety, and implies a restraint upon all the excessive and irregular appetites that human nature is subject to.

Under these two heads I shall treat of purity briefly, and shew under each of them how the light of nature, and how the gospel of Christ requires the practice of it.

I. Temperance in eating and drinking may be included in this command of purity, for we can hardly suppose the apostle omitted so necessary a virtue, and it is not mentioned at all, if it be not implied here. It is not beneath the doctrine of christianity to condescend to give rules about the most common affairs of human life, even food and raiment. It is a piece of impurity to imitate the swine, and to gorge ourselves beyond measure; to give up ourselves to fulfil every luscious appetite, and every luxurious inclination of the taste.

An indulgence of this sort of vice, what infinite disorders doth it bring upon mankind! If a man would read the character of a drunkard painted in very bright and proper colours, and receive the foulest ideas of it in the fairest oratory, he cannot find a better description than Prov. xxiii. 29—32. *Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine, they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not* therefore *upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.* Some men in our age well understand what Solomon here means. *But at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.* The pleasure will be attended with intolerable pain and mortal injury, when the excess of liquor shall work like so much venom poured into the veins, and cast thee into diseases as incurable as the biting of any serpent; it will do thee more mischief than an adder with all his poison. There are many that have felt the words of Solomon true, when their voluptuous sins have been dreadfully recompensed with ruin to their soul and body.

But the inspired writer dwells upon the loathsome subject, and bids us mark the particular effects of it: *Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things;* Prov. xxiii. 33. that is, says a learned paraphrast* upon the text, "thy thoughts will not only grow confused, and all things appear to thee otherwise than

* Bishop Patrick.

they are; but lustful and adulterous desires will be stirred up, which thou canst not rule, and thy mouth being without a bridle, will break forth into unseemly, nay, filthy, scurrilous, or, perhaps, blasphemous language, without respect to God or man." Yea, thou shalt be, saith the wise man, as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast; ver 34. that is, "Thou wilt sottishly run thyself into the extremest hazards, without any apprehensions of danger, being no more able to direct thy course, than a pilot who snores when a ship is tossed in the midst of the sea; no more able to take notice of the peril thou art in, than he that falls asleep on the top of a mast, where he was set to keep the watch." "*They have stricken me*, shalt thou say, *and I was not sick;* they have beaten me, and I felt it not. When I shall awake, I will seek it yet again;" ver. 35. It is as if the wise man had said, "That to complete thy misery, thou shalt not only be mocked, and abused, and beaten, but thou shalt be as senseless as if no harm had befallen thee: And no sooner wilt thou open thine eyes, but thou wilt stupidly seek an occasion to be drunk, and be beaten again."

My friends, have ye never seen a drunkard make that odious figure, in which Solomon represents him? You find human nature is constant to itself: It appears now in Britain, just as it is described in the days of old at Jerusalem in all its vicious excesses. There is a great degree of likeness between our forefathers' intemperance, and their children of late posterity. One would think one such a spectacle as this, or the mere report of it, with an assurance of the truth, should be enough to forbid our lips the excess of liquor, and to set a guard upon ourselves in the hour of temptation.

Not only those who overwhelm themselves with strong drink, and forget reason and themselves, but those that are mighty to drink wine, have a severe censure cast upon them, and a curse in the book of God; Isaiah v. 11. not only *woe to them, that rise up early in the morning, that they may find strong drink*, and continue till night, till wine inflame them; but *woe to them that are mighty to drink wine*, even though they are not utterly overcome by it, to the disorder and disgrace of their understandings, verse 22. The reason is, because nature will not bear such a quantity of wine or strong liquors at first; and it is presumed men have forced nature beyond its original capacity, and thus have grown up, by degrees of sin, to such a strength in drinking. These are they that *call evil good, and good evil*, and that glory in their shame.

Hearken to thy father's advice, O youth, *and despise not thy mother's counsel; hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way of temperance. Be not amongst wine-bibbers, amongst riotous eaters of flesh;* ver. 19. Youth is greedy of pleasure, and in danger of being corrupted by it; therefore avoid the society of drunkards and gluttons. You see they are joined together in the prohibition and threatening of the word of God, "for the glutton and the drunkard shall both come to poverty." A wanton indulgence of the taste will tempt men to revelling and riot, thence follows a neglect of all business; and many a prodigal, who had a fair estate, is by this means become a beggar or a prisoner. Let us be watchful therefore when we sit down at a plentiful table, and put a knife, as it were, to our throat, if we feel the danger of a sharp and wanton appetite; let the guard of our virtue be as sharp and active as our thirst or hunger. Let us not be desirous of feasting ourselves with dainties, for they too often prove deceitful meat: And though they are never so tempting to the palate, yet they may disturb the health of the body, or indispose the

mind for the service of virtue. But this leads me to the next general head, and that is, To consider how the light of nature condemns this vice, this sort of impurity.

If it were my business to make a flourish with learned citations, it were an easy matter to bring the Greeks and Romans hither to pass sentence upon the glutton and the drunkard, and all the luxury of the taste; for it is too mean an indulgence either for a man or a christian. It does not become human nature to endanger the welfare of all its powers, and enslave them all to the single sense of tasting. "I am greater, says Seneca, and born to greater things, than to be a slave to this body, or to live merely to become a strainer of meats and drinks." The wisest of men, and the best writers of all ages, even in the heathen nations, have passed their heavy censures on these impure and brutal follies, whereby we are reduced to the rank of beasts that perish, or perhaps sunk below them by the practices of intemperance; for there are but few of that lower rank of creatures, who swill themselves beyond the demands of nature; or, at least, beyond what nature is able to bear.

Let us argue a little upon this head from the principles of reason, and consider that the chief designs of food are these two, the support of our nature, and the refreshment of our spirits. Therefore give food to him that is hungry, that life may be maintained: Give drink to him that is thirsty, to assist the supports of life, and to refresh it. Give strong drink to him that is ready to faint, that his spirits may be recruited: and wine to him that is heavy of heart, that he may forget his sorrows; *Prov.* xxxi. 6, 7. It is evident that every thing, which goes beyond the mere necessity of nature for its support, does not presently become sinful; because the refreshment of nature is also one end and design of our food. Remember that the supports of nature are designed by the God of nature to make us fit for all the services and duties of life, and the refreshments of it are ordained by the same Author of nature, to render us cheerful in the discharge of those duties. The one is necessary to give us a capacity to perform, and the other proper to render the performance cheerful and delightful to us, and to intermingle our labour with such innocent delights as may awaken our thankfulness to the bounty of our Creator.

Thence it will follow, that the rich are allowed to furnish their tables with a variety of pleasing and grateful food; and that feasts designed for a cheerful enjoyment of our friends, are by no means forbidden by the light of reason, or of scripture: For we gain vigour for action, by having the spirits raised and exhilarated. But it will follow also, that when we have our choice of what we shall eat or drink, we ought to determine not merely by pleasure and appetite, nor feed till we are unfit for service. If we know, or have a good guess before hand, that this cup, or this dish, will render us unfit for the proper business of the day, or incapable of the several duties we are called to; yet if, for the sake of mere sensuality, we venture upon it, God will number it among our sins against the light of nature. Those ends therefore for which God hath ordained our various food, both in his creation and in his providence, namely, the support of nature, and its refreshment; let these be our designs in eating, and give rules for our determination what food we should partake of.

It must be granted indeed, that a sickly person may be indulged in more solicitude about food, and may make it a matter of more distinguishing choice than persons vigorous and healthy. But then the great end must still be kept in the eye, that is, the recovery of strength for future service, where they are much cut off from present

work: For neither the sick nor the healthy, should live for the sake of eating, but both should eat for the sake of living and working.

Now if the light of nature requires such purity and temperance, how much more doth the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ oblige us to it.

I. It is the command of our Redeemer, "That we take heed of surfeiting and drunkenness, lest our hearts at any time be overcharged with them;" *Luke* xxi. 34. And what charge doth the holy apostle give; *Eph.* v. 18. "*Be not drunken with wine, wherein is excess, but be ye filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs.*" Do not be so indulgent to your palate and your glass, as to let excess of wine overtake you, lest you christians should do as heathens have done, and break out into irregular songs, and licentious or profane mirth; but seek rather the largest influences of the blessed Spirit, and give a sacred loose to a devout frame: Break out into divine psalms or songs; comfort yourselves and edify your neighbours thereby. In *Rom.* xiii. 13, 14. St. Paul advises us how we should behave ourselves in this point; "*Let us walk honestly, as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil it in the lusts thereof.*" Put on the spirit of the gospel, and the ornaments of christianity, and then you cannot for shame seek the pleasures of the brute, nor sink down into the base impurities of the animal nature: If you have put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and are his disciples indeed, then look like christians; let the very life of Christ be manifest in your lives: Live above these animal desires, these lower designs of the flesh, which is not the chief nature of the man, much less should it be the chief end of christians to gratify it.

II. Let christians consider, that the original ruin of their natures, soul and body, arose from the indulgence of a foolish appetite. When our mother Eve saw the fruit of the forbidden tree, she thought it was pleasant to the eye, and good for food: She tasted it herself, and tempted Adam to the sin that ruined him and all his offspring. When therefore a temptation to this sort of guilt appears, let us think of all the miseries of our fallen state, and not dare to repeat that crime, which had such dismal consequences. It brought iniquity, pain, and death into human nature, and begun all that dishonour to God, and all that mischief among men, that ever was found in this lower world.

III. Every saint ought to have a mortal quarrel with the flesh, because he carries about the seeds of iniquity in it, and the springs of perverse appetites which ought always to be kept under, lest our very spirits become carnal, and we lose our heavenly crown. Therefore saith the apostle, 1 Cor. ix. 27. *I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection*, and endeavour to be temperate in all things, that running in the christian race, I may obtain the prize. It is the business of a christian to eat and drink in due season, for strength and refreshment, not for luxury and drunkenness, which Solomon forbids to princes; *Eccles.* x. 17. It was an excellent saying of that holy man, Mr. Joseph Allein; "I sit down to my table not to please my appetite, or to pamper my flesh, but to maintain a servant of Jesus Christ, that he may be fit for the Lord's work."

IV. The saints should be pure and holy; even in the affairs of the natural life; for they have meat to eat, that the world knows not of; they drink of the pleasures that flow from God, and from his covenant; and therefore should not be over solicitous about pleasing their meaner appetites. Those that indulge themselves in carnal delicacies,

and make enquiry for the pleasures of the flesh, as the main business of life, What shall I eat, and what shall I drink? Those that live in a round of sensuality, they debase their souls, make themselves unfit for the duties and pleasures of a christian, unfit for divine communications, for holy fellowship, heavenly meditation, and lively exercises of faith, upon unseen things; they damp their zeal for God, blunt their relish for religious delights, and are perpetually defiling their own consciences. *These* are they that *make their God their belly*, while they profess to be christians. But the apostle, in *Phil.* iii. 18, 19. tells us, whatsoever they profess, "*they are enemies of the cross of Christ*, and I cannot speak of it, says he, without weeping."

Now if there be any such sinners amongst us, such slaves to a paltry appetite, that make it a business of too solemn and solicitous enquiry, "how we shall regale the palate, and gratify the taste:" If there are any of us that know not how to forbid ourselves a savoury or luscious dish, even though we know or expect it will discompose the flesh or the mind: If we have not temperance enough to deny the superfluous or excessive glass, when it comes to our turn, nor virtue and courage enough to refuse it, let us take our share in the reproofs of this discourse; and let us remember that we have had fair warning this day from the word of God, that we may not drown our souls in sensual indulgences, and make ourselves unfit for the duties of life, or for the business or the joy of heaven.

HYMN FOR SERMON XXVI.

CHRISTIAN MORALITY, viz. TEMPERANCE.

I.

IS it a man's divinest good,
To make his soul a slave to food?
Vile as the beast whose spirit dies,
And has no hope above the skies?

II.

Can meats or choicest wines procure
Delights that ever shall endure,
Was I not born above the swine,
And shall I make their pleasures mine?

III.

Am I not made for nobler things?
Made to ascend on angels' wings?
Shall my best powers be thus debas'd
And part with heaven to please my taste?

IV.

Can I forget the fatal deed,
How Eve brought death on all her seed?
She tasted the forbidden tree,
Anger'd her God, and ruin'd me.

V.

Was life designed alone to eat?
What is the mouth, or what the meat?
Both from the ground derive their birth,
And both shall mix with common earth.

VI.

Great God, new mould my sensual mind,
And let my joys be more refin'd;
Raise me to dwell among the blest,
And fit me for thy heavenly feast.

SERMON XXVII.

CHRISTIAN MORALITY, viz. CHASTITY, &c.

PHILIP. iv. 8.

WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE PURE, &c.—THINK ON THESE THINGS.

Ὅσα ἁγνὰ, &c.

PURITY of heart and life, in the perfect beauty of it, belongs to no man since our original apostacy. That foul and shameful departure from God, has rendered us all unholy and unclean. But we are recalled to seek our ancient glory, by the messengers of heaven, and the ministry of the gospel. The apostle exhorts us to it in the text. If the word pure be taken in its largest extent, it may include in it temperance in meats and drinks, as well as chastity in behaviour. You have heard already a discourse of temperance, with so hateful an account of the crimes of gluttony and drunkenness, that I hope my hearers have conceived a sacred aversion to such sensualities.

Let us now proceed to the second sense implied in the word, and that is, modesty and chastity of speech and behaviour. This is a most eminent, and most undeniable part of that purity, which St. Paul here requires; and this, in many of his epistles, he insists upon as necessary, in order to make up the character of a christian, and render it honourable; and St. Peter recommends it to the pious women in his day, as a means of the conversion of their husbands, who were gentiles: *That they who obeyed not the word of the gospel, might be won to a* good esteem of Christianity, *while they beheld the chaste conversation of their wives;* 1 Pet. iii. 1, 2.

This virtue stands in opposition to those several vices, which are distinguished by different names in scripture, such as adultery, fornication, lasciviousness.

1. Adultery, when one of the persons who are guilty of impure embraces, is under the sacred bonds of marriage. By the commission of this sin there is injury done to another family; and thus it is not only an offence against the laws of purity, but a violation of the laws of justice.

2. Fornication, when both the guilty persons are free and unmarried. It has been sufficiently proved by many writers, that this is utterly unlawful, howsoever some have attempted to varnish the guilt, and excuse the crime.

3. Lasciviousness, which consists in giving a loose to those impure thoughts, words, and actions, which have an apparent tendency towards the sins before mentioned. Besides these, there are other names and instances of unclean abominations, which I wish could be utterly rooted out from human nature, by burying them in everlasting silence.

If I were to fetch arguments from reason and the light of nature, I might make it appear that these things are criminal, and contrary to those rules of morality, which were written in the heart of man. And perhaps they would have appeared in the same guilty colours to all men, if the light of nature were not obscured by corrupt passions, and licentious appetite. The practice of these impure vices is inconsistent with the great ends for which God has formed our natures, has raised us above the beasts

that perish, and has inclined mankind to form themselves into societies for mutual benefit. The brutes, who have no nature superior to the animal, are not governed by the same laws: But the God of nature, who has made us compound beings, and (shall I say?) hath joined an animal and an angel together to make up a man, expects that the angel should govern the animal in all its natural propensities, and confine it within the rules of religion and the social life.

These vices are also contrary to the solemn ordinances of marriage, which the blessed God instituted in paradise in a state of innocency, and designed to continue through all generations. If these impurities of conversation were publicly permitted, all the tender and most engaging names of relation and kindred, such as father, sister, and brother, would be confounded, and almost abolished among mankind; and what dismal consequences would hence ensue! In what helpless circumstances would children be then brought into this world! And many of the ends of human society would become frustrate and vain.

I confess indeed, that several of these vices were practised in the heathen world without any inward remorse of the mind, without private reproof or public shame. Some of these impurities were allowed by the laws of their country; some were indulged at festivals, and sometimes they were mingled with their religious ceremonies, and made part of the worship of their gods: Idol gods! Abominable religions! Base and shameful worshippers! *For it is a shame*, saith the apostle, *even to speak of those things that are done in secret; those unfruitful works of darkness;* Eph. v. 11, 12. Yet there have been several of the grave, the sober, and the wisest among the gentiles, who being constrained by the mere force of reason, have spoke against these corrupt practices, and have adorned the virtue of chastity with many honourable encomiums.

But how doubtful soever this duty hath been reckoned among the heathen nations, yet it is made necessary by the principles of the christian religion, and a strong and severe guard of prohibitions and threatenings is set all around to secure the practice of it. Now that I may speak of this subject as becomes me, and recommend it in language pure and undefiled, I shall set before you some of those scriptures, that bear witness against all the violations of it, under the following heads:

I. The express precepts of the law of God demand the first place in this catalogue of divine testimonies against impurity, for they were delivered at mount Sinai to many hundred thousands at once, they were ushered in with lightning, and pronounced with thunder. Exod. xx. 14. *Thou shalt not commit adultery.* This is the seventh command: And that there may not be the least tendency towards this sin, the tenth command is set as a preservative and defence, *Thou shalt not* so much as *covet thy neighbour's wife;* verse 17. In this epitome and sum of the laws of God, whereby he rules his creatures, which is called the decalogue or ten commandments, you find this vice of impurity is twice forbidden; once in the perfect act, and again in the criminal wish and intention. Observe here, that though the words of these commands directly point to adultery, yet it appears by the very reason of things, as well as from other passages of scripture, that all unchaste thoughts, words, and actions, are here forbidden, as our younger years have been taught in the catechism.

Nor is this a law that belonged only to the Jews, for the New Testament mentions and enjoins this command with the rest, which are of equal force under the gospel. The law forbids all manner of lust, and saith, *Thou shalt not covet;* Rom. vii. 7. The

great apostle puts the Thessalonians in mind of what he had taught them as the law of Christ. 1 Thess. iv. 2, 3, 4, 5. *For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that you should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the gentiles which know not God.* It is as much as if he had said, it is a dishonour to christianity, and a step of return towards heathenism, to give a loose to impure lusts. He repeats the same thing; Eph. iv. 17—21. *This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other gentiles walk, in the vanity of their minds, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them; because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ;* "if so be ye have been led by him, and taught the truth as it is in Jesus." In vain ye profess to have learned the truth, as it is in Jesus, or to have put on Christ, while you practise the same abominations as ye did before, while ye walk and live as the vile heathen world.

II. The hateful description of these sins which is given us by the holy writers, should print the same odious image of them upon our minds, and for ever forbid the practice. Solomon, a great king, and a man of excellent wisdom, had well known the mischief and madness of this sort of vice; he gives his son the most solemn charge against it in various parts of the book of Proverbs, more especially in the vi. and vii. chapters, which he spends entirely upon this theme, and in the ii. the vi. and the ix. chapters, where he applies near half of them to the same design; wherein, after he has shewn the insinuating flatteries of the wanton woman, he never fails to give notice of some of the terrible attendants of those that follow her. "*For her house inclines to death, and her paths unto the dead; none that go to her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life.* There is scarce any iniquity that does so effectually harden the heart, and prevent all repentance. *Let not thine heart therefore decline to her ways; go not astray in her paths: For she has cast down many wounded, yea, many strong men have been slain by her: Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.*" This leads me to the next particular.

III. If we consider the dismal effects of these impure practices, as they are recorded in sacred history, they should keep our souls awake, and keep us always to the watch, lest we be ensnared. Behold Samson the strongest of men, who was a holy Nazarite, and devoted to God; how was he brought down shamefully from the height of his glory to prison and slavery, to blindness and death, by the love of strange women! Behold the Jewish hero lying like a thoughtless fool upon the lap of Delilah, while the *seven sacred locks of his head were shaven,* and his divine strength *went from him,* for *the Lord departed!* Behold the wretched captive with his eyes bored out by the Philistines, bound with fetters of brass, and grinding in the prison-house! Behold the man who was once their terror, now become their sport, their mockery, and their laughing-stock in the house of Dagon their god: See him there crushed to pieces, and expiring under the weight of his own revenge upon his Philistine enemies; and all this for the love of a harlot! Mark the mischiefs, the calamities, and the bloodshed that pursued the house of David, when adultery and guilt in the matter of Uriah had provoked his God! See how sin and death made wide inroads into his household! See there his son Amnon

slain by his brother Absalom for the folly he had wrought in Israel, and the incest with his sister Tamar! Think of Solomon, the wisest of men, whose heart was enticed away by strange women from the God and religion of his fathers, when he paid such profane and criminal regard to the idols of his mistresses, as to build temples for them near the temple of Jehovah; and *the Lord was angry with Solomon, when his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and he rent the kingdom from him in the days of his son Rehoboam*, and made a long and fatal separation between the tribes of Israel for many generations. And, to name no more, "turn your eyes to Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities of the plain, *giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh;* mark how the Lord *rained fire and brimstone out of heaven upon them*, and they are *set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire;*" Jude 7.

IV. Think of the dreadful threatenings that are denounced against impure sinners in the word of God, and you will find these are flaming witnesses against their practice; Hosea iv. 1—5. "*The Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because of killing, stealing, and adultery; therefore shall the land mourn.*" And God seems to forbid the prophets to give them reproof as though he resolved to destroy them. "*Let no man strive and reprove another.*" His mercy and forgiveness seem to be put to a stand; Jer. v. 7, 9. "*How shall I pardon thee for this? saith the Lord; thy children have forsaken me when I fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves in troops in the harlots' houses. Shall I not visit them for these things? saith the Lord; and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?*" When the apostle Paul had represented this sort of vice in 1 Cor. vi. 18, 19. *as a defilement of the body, which is the temple of God, and the habitation of the Holy Spirit;* he adds this word of terror; iii. 17. "*If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy;*" *for the temple of God is* and ought to be *holy*, and not kept as a nest for unclean vermin. "*Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor those who indulge vile impurities, shall inherit the kingdom of God;* 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. *Such were some of you* indeed, says St. Paul to his converts, *but ye are washed and sanctified* from these pollutions, or you could never have been saved. Therefore, saith the same holy writer, "*Let neither fornication, nor any unclean practices be so much as once named amongst you as becometh saints;*" that is, let them never be named without abhorrence. "*For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor any unclean person, nor covetous man who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience;*" Eph. v. 3—6. The visions of St. John in the book of the Revelation, pronounce the doom of *whoremongers* with the rest of notorious sinners, and give them *their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death;* Rev. xxi. 8. How impiously bold are those sinners, who dare venture through all these terrors to gratify a sensual appetite! Who can rush upon the point of the avenging sword of God, and plunge themselves into everlasting burnings, to taste the deceitful baits of impure and forbidden pleasure!

Before I conclude this head, I would just hint a few directions to those who would preserve their modesty and virtue, and prevail against all temptations to impurity.

1. Set a severe watch upon your eyes and your heart. Keep all the powers of nature under a proper discipline, and guard all the avenues of the soul. Secure your senses without, and your fancy within, as much as possible, from all allurements of this kind.

Let us remember, that sin often begins in the imagination, and therefore we must establish a strict guard upon our roving thoughts, and reduce them when they first begin to go astray. We must lay a strong chain of restraint upon those endless wanderers; for our Saviour himself tells us, "*Out of the heart proceed adulteries and fornications, which defile the man;*" Matt. xv. 19.

We must make a self-denying covenant with our eyes, that we may not look upon temptation, lest we be led astray from the paths of purity. Our blessed Lord himself gives us a sufficient caution, when he explains the seventh commandment: Matt. v. 28. *I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.* When our Saviour forbids a wanton look, he requires that we put a veil upon our eyes, lest, like wandering stars or foolish fires, they betray us into foul and miry pits of pollution, or lead us to deep and dangerous pollutions.

Avoid all impure representations, pictures, and images: Turn your eyes from immodest sights, and your ears from polluted language, whether it be in discourse, or writing, a lewd jest, or a wanton song. Let them not entertain you, though they may be attended and adorned with never so many colours of wit, and charms of music. Romances and novels, and invented stories of forbidden love, have painted over these impurities with shining eloquence, and awakened the same foolish passions in the reader. O how unhappily has the art of verse, which was first consecrated to the service of the temple, been prostituted to the vilest purposes, to give gay colours to temptation, and gild over the foulest images of iniquity! And what a multitude of souls may date the commencement of their guilt and ruin from the time when they began to frequent the poisonous entertainments of the stage! Their ears, which were shocked at first with some of the coarse and foul expressions of modern comedy, by degrees are hardened to bear the most offensive language: Their modesty and blushing dies and vanishes by degrees, till at last they learn to relish the grossest pollutions of the theatre, and perhaps put the fable into practice.

As faith and salvation come by hearing, so iniquity and everlasting death come sometimes by hearing too. And what we would not hear, surely we should not speak. Let us then set a guard upon our tongues, lest they border upon forbidden language. *No filthiness, no foolish talking, no corrupt communication must proceed out of our mouths;* Eph. iv. 29. and v. 4. We should not affect those speeches of a double meaning, which lead the thoughts away to lewd and wanton conceits, and make foul impressions upon the mind. Let your ears hate to be treated with such indecencies, nor let our lips dare to treat others so.

2. Do not make too rich provisions for the feeding of the flesh; indulge not yourselves in the delicacies of the taste, nor in the luxury of excessive sleep; Both of these may incline animal nature to licentious desires: Stand afar off from gluttony and excess of wine, nor pamper the body beyond the just support, and due refreshment of nature. The holy apostle, in his prohibitions, couples *chambering and wantonness with a rioting and drunken practice;* Rom. xiii. 13. and calls them all *works* of *darkness.* It is a good remark of Kempis, a devout papist in former days, "Bridle the appetites of the palate, get a sovereignty over them, and you will be better able to master every other appetite."

3. Always employ yourselves in something innocent and useful, that may engage the

powers of the body, or the mind, or both, that so temptation may never find you idle. The springs of the sin of Sodom were *fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness;* therefore they grew *haughty, and committed abomination before the Lord;* Ezek. xvi. 49, 50. This is an advice of Jerom, one of the christian fathers: Be still doing some work, that the devil, when he comes to tempt, may always find thee busy. Where you are in danger of these sins, put yourselves upon a necessity of diligence all the day, that you may have no time nor room for wild imaginations nor impure indulgences.

4. Avoid the seasons, the places, and the objects of temptation, as far as it is consistent with the necessary duties of life: For he that hath no caution about him, and is not afraid of being tempted, he is not acquainted with human weakness, nor is he so much afraid of sin as he ought to be.

5. Maintain an everlasting and awful sense of the presence of God thy Maker, thy Governor, and thy Judge. Remember the Lord beholds the secret workings of the heart, and the foul practices of darkness and midnight. There is not a place where the eye of God cannot come. What an honourable character hath young Joseph acquired in the word of God, and his name stands recorded with renown in divine history through all ages, for his flight from the allurements of an immodest woman! The guard which he continually placed upon his virtue, was the all-seeing eye of heaven. *How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* Gen. xxxix. 9.

6. Get those scriptures written in your hearts, and ready at all times in your memories, which may be the most effectual antidotes and preservatives against all forbidden pleasure. This was the ancient practice of the saints. Psalm cxix. 11. *Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee. The word of God is the sword of the Spirit,* to put to flight, and to slay whole armies of iniquity.

7. Fly daily to the mercy-seat for divine aid: Commit thy soul and body to the keeping of Christ; he is exalted and authorized to take care of sinners, who make him their refuge; he is also compassionate, and ready to succour the tempted. There is cleansing virtue in the blood of Christ to wash away the foulest guilt, and to sprinkle the conscience of the humble penitent with peace and pardon; and there is all-sufficient power and grace with him to subdue the most raging vices. Make haste to him by humble faith, and most importunate prayer: Continue instant at the throne: Never rest till he hath by his providence and his grace delivered you from the dangerous temptation, or made you conqueror over the sin that easily besets you. There are a thousand souls in heaven, who were once conflicting here with the same impure temptations, but they gained the victory by the blood and Spirit of Christ, *and are made more than conquerors through him who hath loved them.*

I fear I have trespassed upon my hearers, in dwelling thus long on this dangerous theme. It is time to retire, and end my discourse. Those who have a mind to be better furnished with weapons and divine armour against these enemies of purity and virtue, I would recommend to them three books, where they may find abundant provision: And these are Mr. Ostervald's Treatise of Uncleanness, Mr. Henry's Four Discourses against Immorality, and Mr. Baxter's Christian Directory, tome I. chap. 8. part 5. And may the holy and pure Spirit, who attended at the baptism of our Saviour in the form of a dove, which is an emblem of chastity, may he give these waters of the sanctuary a divine efficacy to purify the souls of polluted sinners, and to guard the innocent and the tempted from these dangerous pollutions!

HYMN FOR SERMON XXVII.

CHRISTIAN MORALITY, viz. CHASTITY.

I.

THE Lord, how great his majesty!
How pure are all his ways!
Sinners unclean offend his eye,
Nor stand before his face.

II.

Thou hast ordain'd immortal woes,
And everlasting fire,
To be the just reward of those
Who follow loose desire.

III.

I hear, I read the dreadful doom
Of Sodom in thy word;
And dares a feeble worm presume
Thus to provoke the Lord?

IV.

Dear Saviour, guard me by thy grace,
From thoughts and words unclean,
Nor let temptation gain success
To draw my soul to sin.

SERMON XXVIII.

CHRISTIAN MORALITY, viz. A LOVELY CARRIAGE, &c.

PHILIP. iv. 8.

WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE LOVELY,—THINK ON THESE THINGS.

Ὅσα προσφιλῆ, &c.

MAN was a lovely creature in his first formation and innocence, however he has been debased and dishonoured by the fall. Now there is nothing in all the religion of Christ but what tends to restore man to the excellencies of his original state, or to exalt him above them, and to render him all over amiable. To this end truth and sincerity are recommended to him in the gospel, with a venerable decency in all his conduct. To this end he is required to practise justice to his neighbour, and to keep himself pure and chaste from all the vices of sensuality. Thus far we have proceeded in improving the text. And the man who has attained thus far, has many lovely qualities belonging to him, such as lay a foundation for a good report, and deserve our praises.

Yet there are many things in human conversation, which do not directly fall under the commands of truth and gravity, justice and purity: These the apostle recommends to the Philippians, under the following characters, viz. *things that are lovely, that are of good report, deeds of virtue, and worthy of praise.*

The things that are lovely, are such as look well among men, and have a good appearance in the eyes of the world: Those things that gain the love of our fellow-creatures: Not merely such religious practices, as make us beloved by fellow-christians, but such a temper and conduct as commands the esteem and respect even of the ungodly, and those that profess not strict religion. This ought to be the carriage of the saints of the Most High, they should practise those things that are grateful and pleasing to human nature, so far as innocence allows: those things that may recommend our conversation to our neighbours, and procure the love of all men. Is it not a very desirable thing to have it said of any particular christian, All that know him love him; he hath no enemies but those that are unacquainted with him, unless it be such as hate him upon the same ground as the devil doth, and that is because of his piety and goodness? But to explain this more fully, and impress it with more power upon every one of our consciences, I will descend to particular instances of a lovely carriage. And here I shall mention but these few, *viz.* prudence, moderation, humility, meekness, patience, and love.

I. Prudence is a lovely quality. This teaches us to speak every word, and perform every action of life at a proper time, in the proper place, and toward the proper person. It is prudence that distinguishes our various behaviour toward our fellow-creatures, according to their different ranks and degrees among mankind, or the different relations

in which we stand to them. It is a very desirable excellency to know when it is proper to speak, and when it is best to keep silence; at what seasons, and in what company we should awaken our zeal, and exert our active powers; or when we should hide ourselves, or put a bridle upon our lips, and sit still, and hear.

Prudence is of infinite use in all the affairs of life and religion: Nor is there any hour of the day, nor any place wherein we spend that hour, whether alone or in public, but gives occasion for some exercise of this virtue. It does not belong to human nature to possess this in perfection: Perfect prudence dwells with God alone, God the most lovely of beings: He that comes nearest to it, is the wisest of men, and he gains the love and high esteem of all that are near him; for his conduct in life is of singular advantage to those that converse with him, as well as to himself. This man is consulted by his friends as an earthly oracle, and by his advice he saves many from ruin. Thus he wins and wears their honour and their love.

There are many good qualities both of the natural and moral kind that must meet together, to make up a prudent man. He must be furnished with a memory of things past, and with just and proper observations made upon them, that he may know how to improve every opportunity and occurrence of life to the best purposes, when the same occasions return. There is no prudence without some degrees of experience. But experience alone is not sufficient; he should have also a wide extent of soul, and be able to take a large and comprehensive survey of the concurrent circumstances of things present: And he must be blessed with a solid judgment, that by putting many things at once into the balance, he may find which outweighs the rest, and determine his present conduct thereby. He must have a degree of sagacity, to foresee future events, according to the usual consequences of things in this mortal state. The prudent man foresees the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished; *Prov.* xxii. 3. that is, They suffer for their want of prudence and foresight. And besides all these, he should be a man of firm and steady resolution to go through difficulties, and to put in practice what his judgment has determined.

Rash and ungoverned passions are great enemies of this virtue. Both these push a man onward to a hasty and irregular conduct. His lips multiply folly, and his hands practise it through the impatience of his spirit. His unguarded talk, and precipitant actions plunge himself into snares, and sometimes involve his acquaintance in the same mischief.

There are other characters also inconsistent with prudence, such as an unthinking and an unsteady temper. The thoughtless person lives at a venture, walks always at random, and seems to aim at nothing. He enjoys the present hour indeed, talking and acting according to the mere appearances of things. He is content with a slight sudden view of any thing without recollection or forethought; and in a most literal sense takes no thought for the morrow. The fickle and inconstant man, he may aim at something indeed, and have honest designs in his head, but is ever changing the means to attain them, and pursues nothing with that steadiness that prudence requires, or that the necessity of human affairs demands of every man that would be wise and happy. Such men may be pitied as weak and silly, but they are seldom esteemed, or much beloved in the world, while prudence is so much wanting.

There is no necessity that I should cite special parts of the word of God, to encourage us to seek this most amiable quality, since the recommendations of true wisdom, both

human and divine, are scattered up and down through all the sacred writings: And the Spirit of God has given us one or two books on purpose to teach us prudence; these are Ecclesiastes and the Proverbs of Solomon. Nor can I propose any better direction to gain universal wisdom, than to read the book of Proverbs often with diligence and humble prayer.

II. Moderation is another lovely quality. It teaches us to maintain a medium between those wild extremes, into which human nature is ready to run upon every occasion.

When a warm and imprudent talker adorns some common character with excessive praises, and carries it up to the stars; the moderate man puts in a cautious word, and thinks it is sufficient to raise it half so high. Or when he hears a vast and unreasonable load of accusation and infamy thrown upon some lesser mistakes in life, the moderate man puts in a soft word of excuse, lightens the burden of reproach, and relieves the good name of the sufferer from being pressed to death. When he sees oppression and violence practised among his neighbours, the justice of his soul directs him to take the part of the injured person, and his own moderation and goodness incline him to do it in such a manner, as may calm and suppress the resentment of the oppressed, and soften and melt the oppressor into compliance with the rules of justice. Thus he reconciles them both, without giving offence to either.

When any sects of christians seem to be carried away with the furious torrent of some prevailing notions, or some unnecessary practices, some special superstition, or a contentious spirit, the moderate man tries to shew how much of truth and goodness may be found amongst each party, where all agree to hold Christ Jesus the head; though he dares not renounce a grain of truth or necessary duty, for the sake of peace, and he would *contend earnestly*, where providence calls him, for the essential articles of *faith which were once delivered to the saints;* for he knows the "*wisdom that is from above is first pure, and then peaceable;*" James iii. 17. Yet he takes this occasion to prove that some truths or some practices, are articles of less importance to the christian life; that they are not worthy of such unchristian quarrels; and thus he attempts, as far as possible, to reconcile the angry disputers. Sometimes he has the happiness to shew them both that they fight in the dark; he explains their opinions and their contests, and puts the best sense upon both of them: And when he hath brought them into the light, he makes it appear that they are friends and brethren; and that religion and the gospel are safe on both sides, if they would dwell together without fighting, but that it is sorely endangered by their battles. So St. Paul dealt with the Jewish and gentile christians, and assured them that they both belonged to the kingdom of God, and the church of Christ, though they quarrelled about flesh, and herbs, and holy-days. How lovely, how glorious, how desirable is such a character as this!

I confess when a party-spirit runs high among the different sects of religion, or the different divisions of mankind, this most amiable virtue is called by the scandalous names of indifferency, and lukewarmness, and trimming; and it sustains a world of reproaches from both the quarrelling parties. Moderation, though it is the blessed principle which awakens and assists men to become peace-makers, yet at the same time when it enters into the battle to divide the contenders, it receives an unkind stroke from either side. This the reconciler expects, and he bears it for the sake of union and love.

The moderate man in cases of private property or interest, does not insist upon the

utmost of his own right with a stiff and unyielding obstinacy, but abates of his just pretensions for the sake of peace; and what he practises himself, he persuades others to practise in the like contests. This is that moderation and gentleness, which the great apostle recommends a few verses before my text. *Phil.* iv. 5. *Let your moderation be known unto all men.* And our blessed Lord himself gives the moderate man this illustrious encomium, Blessed are the meek, who submit rather than quarrel, for they shall inherit the earth. *Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God;* Matt. v. 5, 9. Happy souls whom the God of truth, and the God of peace, acknowledges for his children, and to whom he promises a large inheritance!

And let it be observed also, that whatsoever hard usage the sons of peace may meet with, while the ferment of parties is hottest, and the storm is high, yet when the clamour and rage are sunk and calm, when the party-fury hath spent itself, and is grown cool enough to suffer men to bethink themselves, and to see all things in their true colours, then the man of moderation stands approved of men as well as of God; the divine virtue appears in its own lovely form, and receives a becoming share of honour.

III. Humility is a lovely virtue. It is beautiful and becoming for a man to divest himself of all affected grandeur, and not to exalt his head above his neighbour. O that we were all clothed with humility! It is an ornament that becomes sinners well. Let us put it on with our daily raiment, and strive to vie with each other which shall practise this grace in the greatest perfection.

How unlovely a carriage is it to boast ourselves of any superior quality we possess, or to assume lofty airs, because we have more money than our neighbours! To aggrandize ourselves in our own esteem, in our own language, in our behaviour, because we fancy ourselves to be better dressed, or better fed than our fellow-creatures! And if we have a little honour put upon us by the providence of God, it is a criminal vanity for us to grow haughty and insolent upon that account. I am in pain whensoever I hear a man treat his servant as he does his dog: As though a poor man were not made of the same clay, nor born of the same ancient race as his master: As though Adam, whose name is dust, was not our common father, or a lord had not the same original as other men.

Nay, the nobler possessions of the mind, ingenuity and learning, and even grace itself, are no sufficient ground for pride. It is a comely thing to see a man exalted by many divine gifts, and yet abasing himself. It is a lovely sight to behold a person well adorned with virtue and merit, and glorified in the mouths of all men, and yet concealing himself: To see a man of shining worth drawing, as it were, a curtain before himself, that the world might not see him, while the world do what they can to do him justice, and draw aside the veil to make his merit visible. Not that a man of worth is always bound to practise concealment; this would be to rob mankind of the blessing God has designed for them, and to wrap up his talents, in the unprofitable napkin. But there are occasions wherein a worthy and illustrious person may be equally useful to the world, and yet withdraw himself from public applause. This is the hour to make his humility appear.

How graceful and engaging is it in persons of title and quality to stoop to those that are of mean degree, to converse freely at proper seasons with those that are poor and despicable in the world, to give them leave to offer their humble requests, or sometimes to debate a point of importance with them! Not all the dignity of their raiment can

render them half so honourable as this condescension does; for nothing makes them so much like God. The High and Holy One, who inhabits eternity, stoops down from heaven to visit the afflicted, and to dwell with the poor. And surely, when we set ourselves before the divine majesty, we are meaner and more contemptible in his eyes, than it is possible for any fellow-creature to be in ours; he humbles himself to behold princes.

It must be allowed indeed, that where God and the world have placed any person in a superior station, and given him a sensible advancement above his fellow-creatures, he is not bound to renounce the honours that are his due, nor to act beneath the dignity of his character and state. This would be to confound all the beautiful order of things in the natural, civil, and religious life. But there are cases and seasons that often occur, when great degrees of humility may be practised without danger of sinking one's own character, or doing a dishonour to our station in the world. There is an art of maintaining state with an air of modesty, nor is there any need to put on haughty and scornful airs, in order to secure the honours of a tribunal, or the highest offices of magistracy. I have known a man who acted in an exalted station with so much condescension and candour, that all men agreed to love and honour him so far, that it was hard to say, whether he was most honoured, or most beloved.

How amiable a behaviour is it in younger persons, when respect is paid to age, and the honour is given to the hoary head that nature and scripture join to require! Lev. xix. 32. *Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man: and fear thy God: I am the Lord.* Though the character of the aged person, in respect of riches, quality, and learning, may be much inferior, yet the wisdom that is naturally supposed to be derived from long experience, lays a foundation for this superior honour: And I look upon it as a part of the shame and just reproach of our day, that there is such a licentious insolence assumed by youth to treat their elders with contempt. But so much the more lovely is the carriage of those who, in spite of evil custom, treat old age with reverence, and abhor the pert and petulant indignities that some of their companions cast upon the writings and counsels of their ancestors.

And here I beg leave also humbly to admonish my fathers, that they practise the lovely grace of condescension, when they converse with those that are young. I entreat them to permit a youth of an inquisitive genius, to propose an argument for some farther improvement of knowledge, or to raise an objection against an established doctrine, and not to answer him with an imperious frown, or with the reproaches of heresy or impertinence. I beseech them to indulge the rising generation in some degrees of freedom of sentiment, and to offer some demonstration for their own opinions, besides their authority, and the multitude of their years. The apostle Peter's advice may be addressed to persons of all ages and characters: 1 Pet. v. 5. *Ye younger, submit yourselves to the elder: Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.* If we have more knowledge than others, how lovely is our conduct, when we teach and instruct them, not like sovereigns of their faith, and dictators to their understanding, but in a way of friendly conversation, and mutual improvement! If any thing occurs to be debated, it is a sign of modesty to yield to the force of argument, and not to resolve before-hand to be infallible and obstinate, as though we were exempted from the common frailty of human nature, and free from all possibility of mistake. While we are arguing with others, in order to convince them, how graceful a thing is it, when we have the power of the argument

on our own side, to keep ourselves from insult and triumph! how engaging a behaviour toward our opponent, when we seem to part as though we were equal in the debate, while it is evident to all the company, that the truth lies wholly on our side!

Yet I will own there are seasons, when the obstinate and the assuming disputant should be made to feel the force of an argument, by displaying it in its victorious and triumphant colours: But this is seldom to be practised, so as to insult the opposite party, except in cases where they have shewn a haughty and insufferable insolence. Some persons perhaps can hardly be taught humility without being severely humbled; and yet where there is need of this chastisement, I had rather any other hand should be employed in it than mine.

IV. Meekness is another of the lovely graces. This is contrary to wrath and malice, and all the angry passions, as humility stands in opposition to pride. As there are generally some secret workings of pride in the heart, when a man gives indulgence to his wrathful passions; so where a person has thoroughly learned the practice of humility, the grace of meekness is easily attained, and indeed it seems to be a necessary consequent of it.

How lovely is the character of a man, who can hear himself censured and reviled, without reviling again! Who can sustain repeated affronts, without kindling into flame and fury! Who has learned to bear injuries from his fellow-creatures, and yet withhold himself from meditating revenge! He can sit and hear a strong opposition made to his sentiments, without conceiving an affront: He can bear to be contradicted without resenting: And as he never loves to give offence to any man, so neither is he presently offended. It is only the more peevish and feeble pieces of human nature, that are ready to take offence at trifles, and many times they make their own foolish jealousies a sufficient ground for their indignation.

We cannot expect to pass through the world, and find every thing peaceful and pleasant in it. All men will not be of our mind, nor agree to promote our interest. There are savages in this wilderness, which lies in our way to the heavenly Canaan; and we must sometimes hear them roar against us. Divine courage will enable us to walk onward without fear, and meekness will teach us to pass by without resenting. We should learn to feel many a spark of angry fire falling upon us from the tongues of others, and yet our hearts should not be like tinder ready to catch the flame, and to return the blaze. The meek christian, at such a season, possesses his soul in patience, as good David did, when Shimei sent his malice and his curses after him: The saint at that time was in an humble temper, and said, *Let Shimei curse.* We should not *render evil for evil*, but according to the sacred direction of scripture, endeavour to *overcome evil with good;* Rom. xii. 21.

Anger is not utterly forbidden to the christian; yet happy is he that has the least occasion for it. In *Eph.* iv. 26. the apostle gives us this rule: "*Be ye angry, and sin not.*" As if he would have said, when the affairs of life seem to require a just resentment and anger, look upon it as a dangerous moment, and watch against a sinful excess. Let us never give a wild loose to our wrath, but always hold the reins of government with a strong hand, lest it break out into forbidden mischief. When we give ourselves leave to be offended, let the anger appear to be directed against the sin of the offender, if possible, more than against his person.

Let our anger be well-timed, both as to the season and the length of it. The seasons of it should be very uncommon; a christian should seldom awaken his anger, and the continuance of it must be very short. "*Let not the sun go down upon your wrath, nor give place to the devil;*" Eph. iv. 26, 27. The long sullen resentment which is practised by some persons, carried on from day to day with a gloomy silence, and now and then venting itself in a spiteful word, or a sly reproach, is by no means becoming the name and spirit of a christian. This is *giving place to the devil*, and making room for him to lodge in our hearts. This is as much contrary to meekness, as a short and sudden fury is, and perhaps carries in it a guilt more aggravated in the sight of God.

Yet neither should our anger indulge itself in loud and noisy practices, nor fill the house with a brawling sound. "*It is better to dwell in a corner of the house-top, than to cohabit in a palace with such a brawling companion of life;*" Prov. xxi. 9. And the wise man has repeated it again in the xxv. chapter, as a matter worthy of a double notice. St. Paul forbids this practice to the Ephesians; *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice;* Eph. iv. 31.

Nor should our resentments carry us to any cruel practices. The word of God spends its curses upon such sort of anger; Gen. xlix. 7. *Cursed be the wrath of Simeon, for it was fierce; and the anger of Levi, for it was cruel.* You know what mischiefs it hurried them into, even to foul treachery and murder, and the destruction of a whole country. The grace of meekness is an enemy to all these practices, and a happy preservative from them.

V. Patience is a lovely virtue. I am not now speaking of that religious exercise of it, which consists in a humble submission to the providences of God, without repining at his hand, or sending up our murmurs against heaven; but a patient conduct to our fellow-creatures is the thing which I chiefly design here to recommend.

When some persons stand in need of any of the necessaries or conveniences of life, they must be supplied first, they can brook no delay; let all the world stand by waiting till they are served; and their anger is quickly kindled if their affairs are not dispatched in a moment. They make no allowances for the necessities or conveniences of others; nor for the various accidents that attend human life, which may stop the speed of the most diligent servant, and constrain him unwillingly to delay his message or his work. But the patient christian considers all things; desires but his share of the attendance of his fellow-creatures, and waits without clamour till the proper season. He makes wise and kind allowances for every incident of life that may give just occasion to a delay, and gains the love of all that are about him by his most engaging carriage.

How lovely is it to see a teacher waiting upon those that are slow of understanding, and taking due time and pains to make the learner conceive what he means, without upbraiding him with his weakness, or reproaching him with the names of stupid and senseless! This is to imitate God, the God of long suffering and patience, *Who giveth wisdom to all that ask, and upbraideth not;* James i. 5. The patient man attends and waits upon those that are slow of speech, and hears an argument fully proposed before he makes his reply. This is an honourable and lovely character; *But he that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him;* Prov. xviii. 13. Perhaps he is utterly mistaken in the objection which his friend was going to make, then he is justly put to the blush for his folly and impatience.

The virtue of patience teaches us to be calm and easy toward our fellow-creatures,

while we sustain sharp and continued afflictions from the hand of God. It is the unhappy conduct of some christians, that when the great God puts them under any sore trial or chastisement, they are angry with all their friends around them, and scatter abroad their discontents in the family, and many times make them fall heaviest upon their most intimate friends. If one were to search this matter to the bottom, we should find the spring of it is an impatience at the sovereign hand of God; but because their christianity forbids them to vent their uneasiness at heaven, they divert the stream of their resentment, and make their fellow-creatures feel it: So a piece of unripe fruit pressed with a heavy weight from above, scatters its sour juice on every thing that stands near it, and gives a just emblem of the impatient christian.

But what a lovely sight is it to behold a person burdened with many sorrows, and perhaps his flesh upon him has pain and anguish, while his soul mourns within him: yet his passions are calm, he possesses his spirit in patience, he takes kindly all the relief that his friends attempt to afford him, nor does he give them any grief or uneasiness but what they feel through the force of mere sympathy and compassion! Thus, even in the midst of calamities, he knits the hearts of his friends faster to himself, and lays greater obligations upon their love by so lovely and divine a conduct under the weight of his heavy sorrows.

VI. Love to mankind in the various branches of it, is a most lovely quality, and well becomes a christian.

Should I speak of love in the heart, which ever thinks the best concerning others, and wishes and seeks their welfare and happiness: Should I speak of it as it works on the tongue, and appears in all friendly language, whether the object be present or afar off: Should I describe it as it discovers itself in the hand of assistance and bounty, to relieve the poor and helpless: Each of these would yield sufficient matter for a whole discourse; and this grace would appear lovely in all its forms. It is a pain to my thoughts to omit it here: Methinks I can hardly tell how to let it go without large encomiums: Nor could I prevail with myself to pass it over now with so brief a mention, if I did not design to employ an hour or two on this subject hereafter.

The second part of this Sermon.

I proceed to shew how the very light of nature recommends every agreeable and obliging character; every lovely quality that is found among mankind; and reason exhorts us to the acquirement and practice of it.

I. Our own interest directs us to it. It is a natural good quality, and a most useful thing, to desire the love of others, to seek the favour of our fellow-creatures. It is a very lawful ambition to covet the good-will of those with whom we converse; and to pursue such practices as may procure us a place in their good opinion and friendship. We who are born for society, must naturally desire to stand well with mankind; and that our neighbours should wish our welfare, should treat us with decency and civility, and love; should assist our interest, and do us good when we stand in need of them: And if so, then the rule of justice obliges us to practise the same towards them, which we desire they should practise towards us. The more we exercise of *humility, meekness, patience, charity,* and *good-will* towards our neighbours, the more reason have we to expect the same returns of a lovely carriage from them. And it is no small advan-

tage in life for a person to be much beloved. When he falls under sudden distresses, every man is ready to relieve him; when he meets with perplexing difficulties, he has the ready assistance of multitudes at his command, because he hath many lovers.

II. It is a most generous character, and the sign of a great and good soul, to delight to please those with whom we converse. It is a lovely sight to behold a person solicitous to make all round about him easy and happy. Such amiable souls as these, it is a frequent practice, and a pleasure to them, to contradict their own natural inclinations, in order to serve the desires or the interest of their friends. A happy temper! that finds so much satisfaction in this self-denial, that the very virtue loses its name, and it becomes but another sort of self-pleasing! Such persons are in pain, when they find their friends hard to be pleased, and they suffer sometimes too much uneasiness in themselves, because of the perverse humours of those they converse with. This uneasiness indeed may arise to a criminal excess, but the spring of it has something amiable.

I could wish every soul of us would learn a lovely carriage. For,

III. It makes us resemble God himself. And yet there are some that will be selfish and churlish, that will practise the furious or the peevish passions, through some reigning principle of pride, or covetousness, impatience, or envy. There are some that delight in vexing their fellow-creatures, and in giving them torment and pain. Part of these qualities make us akin to brutes of the worser kind, when we take care of none but self, and are regardless of our neighbour's welfare. "If self be healthy and rich, easy and honoured, it is no matter though the rest of the world sustain sickness, and poverty, and scandal." Others of these unlovely characters approach nearer to the spirit of the devil, who takes delight in torturing his fellow-creatures, and doing what mischief he can amongst men.

But it is a God-like temper to take a sweet satisfaction in diffusing our goodness, and in pleasing and in serving all that are near us. "*Let us then be followers of God as dear children;*" Eph. v. 1. He is the original beauty, he is the loveliest and the best of beings. To be good, and to do good, is a divine perfection, and let us remember it is a perfection that may be imitated too. *He causes his sun to rise, and his rain to fall on the just and the unjust, and fills the hearts* even of the evil as well as the good *with food and gladness*, when he *gives them fruitful seasons;* Acts xiv. 17. Let us not dare then to be rough, and quarrelsome, and sullen, and ill-natured, while we profess to be his offspring. Let there be something lovely in our whole temper and conduct, while we pretend to be imitators of the God of love.

And does the light of nature furnish us with all these motives for a lovely carriage? Then surely the light of scripture enforces them all. The gospel obliges christians to this practice by much stronger arguments, and it lays on us more substantial obligations.

I. The blessed and ever-glorious Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, give us in the gospel a divine example of this practice.

Has God, the great and glorious God, manifested a lovely conduct in his works of creation, and his ways of providence? How much more glorious a pattern has he set us in the transactions of his redeeming love! What condescension hath he here shewn! What gentleness! What patience and forbearance! What forgiveness! What infinite and endless discoveries of grace has he made in his gospel! *God the Father reconciling the world to himself by Jesus Christ*, has a peculiar sweetness of aspect, and most amiable

appearance. Here every christian beholds him such as he revealed himself to Moses, when he caused his *glory to pass before him;* Ex. xxxiv. 6. *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,* &c. The Son of God stooping down to take flesh and blood upon him, made the most amiable figure in the universe. Even in his glorious and triumphant state in heaven, he is represented by a *Lamb that was slain,* an emblem of meekness and innocence. And if ever the blessed Spirit appeared in the shape of any living creature, it was in the *form of a dove,* a lovely and gentle animal. Thus the blessed Trinity conspire to teach us this amiable and divine carriage.

II. The Son of God incarnate has brought a lovely pattern of this practice nearer to us in his whole deportment on earth. I cannot part with the most graceful example of our Lord Jesus Christ with a slight notice. He came into this world partly with a design to become our pattern in every virtue, and in every grace. Let us turn our eyes towards him in all the circumstances and behaviours of life, and he will ever appear, as he is in himself, the *chiefest of ten thousands, and altogether lovely.* Let us take a survey of him under those several particulars, in which an amiable carriage has been described.

Is prudence a lovely virtue? How perfectly wise was the conduct of our Lord! How carefully did he attend to the circumstances of time and place, while he dwelt among mankind! How happily did he suit his conversation to his company! How wisely did he derive his divine discourses from the daily occurrences of life! How admirably did he distribute his benefits according to the various necessities of men! So that the unprejudiced world pronounced concerning him, "*He has done all things well.*" Shall we be rash and foolish, fickle and imprudent, and live at random in our words and our works, when we have so divine a pattern of prudence before us in the history of the gospel?

Is moderation another lovely character, and a peace-maker an amiable title? Such was our blessed Lord, and such should his followers be. How glorious a sight is it to behold the Son of God coming down from heaven to be a Mediator betwixt his offended Father and his offending creatures! To reconcile heaven and earth together, and rather than fail in this attempt, he gladly exposed himself to shame and death, and made a cement of everlasting friendship betwixt God and man with his own blood. Shall we, who are reconciled by such amazing transactions, quarrel with each other for trifles, and form ourselves into parties for rage, and strife, and hatred, and yet profess the name of the great Reconciler! Are we not commanded to *follow peace with all men, as far as possible,* with the security of our holiness and peace with God? And how can we otherwise hope to be the subjects and favourites of the Prince of peace?

Is humility another part of an amiable character? Who was ever humble as the Son of God? "The *brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, who emptied himself, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man, and humbled himself yet lower, even to the death of the cross,* and to the dust of the grave;" Phil. ii. 6, 9. Therefore the Father loved him, and the Father exalted him. This is the man, the God-man, who calls us to the practice of this virtue; *Learn of me,* says he, *for I am meek and lowly, and ye shall find rest for your souls;* Matt. xi. 29. What folly and madness is it for dust and ashes to be proud, when God's own Son was humble! And he gives us a noble instance, to assure us that humility is a lovely quality: When the rich young man in the gospel came, and kneeled before him to ask

his advice, *Jesus looked upon him, and loved him;* and would have left it upon record in his word, that there was something lovely in a modest and humble carriage, even where the saving grace of God was wanting; *Mark* x. 21.

Meekness and patience are the next things I mentioned, that go to make up the character of a lovely person. But who was meek as the Son of God is? What affronts did he endure, even while he was inviting sinners in the most affecting language to their own eternal happiness! What shameful mockery did he sustain! What loads of malicious and infamous blasphemy! But *when he was reviled, he reviled not again;* 1 Peter ii. 23. *as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so opened he not his mouth;* Isaiah liii. 7. O when shall we learn to imitate our blessed Lord, and forbear and forgive as he did!

How was his patience tried to the utmost! And that not only in the fruitless and thankless labours of his life among a cruel and insolent race of men, but in the approaches of his bloody death. When the blessed Redeemer lay agonizing in the garden, or hung bleeding on the cross, to see him oppressed with the weight of the wrath of God due to our sins, conflicting with the rage of devils, forsaken by his friends, and surrounded with the profane insults of barbarous men: What a mournful and moving spectacle! And yet there is something divinely amiable in it, to behold him all over calm and patient, and meditating immortal and forgiving love. What unworthy followers are we of the blessed Jesus, *the Lamb that was slain,* when upon every occasion we take fire, and break out into an impatient fury!

But if I should enter upon the last instance of a lovely character, and begin the mention of love, how far beyond all example, and beyond all description, is the love of our Lord Jesus! How tender were the compassions of his heart! How extensive the benevolence of his soul! What melting language of love dropped from his lips hourly! And how were his mortal and immortal powers employed in procuring infinite blessings for sinful men, in distributing them amongst the rebellious! O that we could learn to think, and speak, and act like our blessed Saviour, whose life and whose death was a rich and various scene of divine and human love!

III. I might draw further arguments from the examples, and from the writings of the apostles and holy men in the primitive days of christianity; when they were all of one heart and one soul, and did every thing to please and serve their fellow-christians. I would mention the epistles of St. John; What a divine spirit of love breathes in them! But next to our Lord Jesus, I should rather turn your eyes and thoughts to the temper and conduct of St. Paul, the greatest of the apostles, and the nearest to Christ. How did *he please all men,* not *seeking* his *own profit, but their salvation,* even *as Christ pleased not himself!* And he leaves us his own example, in subordination to his Lord, *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ;* Rom. xv. 1—3. and *give none offence, neither to Jew nor gentile;* 1 Cor. x. 32. Who is there sorrowful among you, and I sympathize not? *Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended,* and I do not share in the pain? 2 *Cor.* xi. 29. I bear and *endure all things for the elects' sake, that they may be saved;* 2 Tim. ii. 10. How lovely was his behaviour in all respects! His epistles are full of it; it shines through every page: His character demands a volume to describe it, all worthy of our imitation, and our wonder.

But I must hasten to the last motive derived from christianity, and that is the nature and design of the gospel itself. It is the most lovely of all religions. Wisdom, humility, peace, patience, meekness, moderation, and love, run through every part of the

covenant of grace, like so many bright and beautiful colours joined together in the rainbow, that stretches its glory round the lower sky, and seals an ancient and everlasting peace between earth and heaven.

There is therefore the most sovereign and constraining obligation laid upon us christians, to do all things that are lovely, that we may make our holy religion appear like itself, and cause christianity to be beloved of men. Every christian is in some degree entrusted with the honour of Christ, and with the credit and renown of his gospel. Let us be watchful then to take all opportunities, and use all pious methods to make our hope appear glorious, and set the name of Christ in its own amiable light, and to *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.*

How dishonourable and shameful a thing is it for a christian to have an unlovely carriage, or to shew any thing in his conduct that is rough and forbidding! What a blemish does it cast upon the gospel which he professes! Let us talk what we will of the sublimer glories of christianity, and profess an acquaintance with the deepest mysteries; yet with all our flaming zeal for the faith, we may become scandals to the gospel, if we abandon the practices of love. The world will judge of our religion by our temper and carriage. We give occasion therefore to the world to upbraid us, *What do you more than others?* If we, who pretend to be christians, who have professed the most lovely of all religions, are guilty of practices unworthy of that sacred name: When they see our carriage as bad as others, they will be ready to cry out, *What is your beloved more than another beloved?* What are your doctrines better than others, if your practice differs not from others? And are you willing it should be said of you, that you are the occasions of shame and scandal to the name and religion of Christ?

We should do all things that are amiable in the sight of men, that the gospel may have the glory of it: Shall I say, the gospel of Christ deserves it at our hands? If the gospel brings so rich a salvation to us, it is fitting we should bring a great deal of honour to it. How honourable is it to the gospel of Christ, when persons of a rough, crabbed, sour temper, are converted by this gospel, are become christians indeed, and are made all over amiable, and soft, and obliging in their deportments; when they carry it like new creatures, like persons that are changed indeed, that have much of the spirit of love in them, the temper of the gospel, and the temper of heaven! It is this gospel, as I have said before, that turns lions into lambs, and ravens into doves, the most savage creatures into mild and gentle.

While we are thus engaged in the practice of love, we have no need to abandon our zeal for the truth; but we should separate our divine zeal from all our own guilty passions, lest, instead of honouring God, we should destroy his children. The servant of the Lord may be bold and stedfast in the defence of the gospel, but he must *be gentle towards all men, ready to teach,* and patient under injuries. *He must not strive* like a hero for victory; but when any *oppose themselves to the truth, he must instruct them in meekness;* 2 Tim. ii. 24. While we are peaceful and harmless, we may be at the same time prudent and wise; our Lord Jesus has joined these two characters; *Matt.* x. 16. And it is a very lovely inscription for a disciple of Christ to wear in all his public and private conversation, *wise as serpents,* and *harmless as doves.* Thus we may guard ourselves from the malice of the world, while we attempt to win them by all the sacred methods of humanity and divine goodness.

HYMN FOR SERMON XXVIII.

CHRISTIAN MORALITY, viz. A LOVELY CARRIAGE.

I.

O 'TIS a lovely thing to see
A man of prudent heart,
Whose thoughts, and lips, and life agree
To act a useful part.

II.

When envy, strife, and wars begin
In little angry souls,
Mark how the sons of peace come in,
And quench the kindling coals.

III.

Their minds are humble, mild, and meek,
Nor let their fury rise;
Nor passion moves their lips to speak,
Nor pride exalts their eyes.

IV.

Their frame is prudence mix'd with love;
Good works fulfil their day;
They join the serpent with the dove,
But cast the sting away.

V.

Such was the Saviour of mankind,
Such pleasures he pursu'd;
His flesh and blood were all refin'd,
His soul divinely good.

VI.

Lord, can these plants of virtue grow
In such a soul as mine?
Thy grace can form my nature so,
And make my heart like thine.

SERMON XXIX.

CHRISTIAN MORALITY, viz. THINGS OF GOOD REPORT, &c.

PHILIP. iv. 8.

WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE OF GOOD REPORT,—THINK ON THESE THINGS.

Ὅσα εὔφημα, &c.

THE value of a good name was so great under the Jewish dispensation, that the Spirit of God does not think it beneath his care to recommend it to his chosen people, by the mouth of Solomon, the wisest of men. *It is better* and more worth *than precious ointment;* Eccles. vii. 1. It was counted an ornament and entertainment at public feasts, to have rich oils poured upon the head; the price of some of them was exceeding great; they gave refreshment to the natural spirits, and spread a perfume through all the company. But a good name is of greater price, it is a rich ornament to the character of him that possesses it, and has a considerable influence toward his happiness; so that to use the words of Solomon again; Prov. xxii. 1. *It is rather to be chosen than great riches.*

The blessed apostle of the gentiles is of the same mind, and he recommends to the christian world, the practice of those things that are of good report, which is the way whereby a good name is to be obtained. He had just before recommended to us the things that are lovely in the eyes of men, and such as will render us well beloved among our neighbours. Now he invites us to the practice of those *things that are of good report* in the world, such as will procure us reputation and a good name, where we may live, especially among the wise and sober part of mankind. This hath some difference in it from the former, though it must be granted, that all things that are lovely, have also a tendency to obtain a good name.

There are many things in the conduct of life, which do not so directly offer themselves to us, as parts of necessary justice, piety, or goodness. But yet they are such as bear a good character in the world, and they give to the man that practises them, a good reputation among his fellow-creatures: on the contrary, there are several other practices, which it is not easy to prove directly sinful, yet they are of ill report, and they ought not to be indulged among christians. Among these practices of good report, some are changeable with the times and customs of the country, and they obtain a different character and esteem, according to the age and place wherein we dwell; others always and in all places among sober and wise men, obtain the same character; they have been in all ages and in all nations, esteemed things of good report: The nature of them seems to be unchangeable: And it is this sort of actions only that I shall take notice of. By various particulars this head will be better illustrated and improved, than it can be by any general descriptions.

It is a matter of good report to mind our own business, yet to be of a public spirit, to be regular in our conduct, to keep the best company, to abstain from the utmost bounds of things lawful, and in doubtful matters, to follow the practices of the wisest and the best. As I discourse upon each of these particulars, I shall observe what are those opposite practices of evil report, which we ought to avoid.

I. It is a thing of good report to mind our own business. The holy apostle requires it; 1 Thess. iii. 11. *That ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business.* One would think there should be no need of study and application in order to be quiet; but some persons are of so turbulent and restless a temper, that they naturally intermeddle with every thing: They had need take pains with themselves to keep themselves quiet, and busy only in their proper work. The word in the Greek φιλοτιμεῖσθαι signifies that we should be ambitious of quietness and diligence in our calling, for it is a matter of honour and credit. In whatsoever station we are placed, it is industry must gain reputation. There are other great and valuable advantages of it, but I confine myself now to this one, that it is a thing of good report among men.

If persons are called to magistracy, let them attend to the work of their superior post. Let them rule and govern with all diligence, and fulfil that office well, with which God has entrusted them. Let them employ themselves much in their proper sphere, and not wear the honourable title in idleness, or bear the sword in vain, which hath been too frequent a practice in this great city, and thereby vice has grown rampant, and reformation of manners hath been shamefully discouraged.

Those who are made ministers of the gospel, let them make it their business to win souls to salvation, to bring in sinners to faith and holiness, and to edify the saints by their exhortations, by their doctrine, by their example. We should be *instant in season, and out of season, reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long suffering and doctrine;* 2 Tim. iv. 2. *Let him that ministers, wait on his ministry: He that teacheth, on teaching; he that exhorteth, on exhortation;* Rom. xii. 7. Let us not waste our time and our best talents in the pursuit of laborious trifles, in intricate and perplexing controversies, which are less necessary to the life of christianity, or on useless and angry squabbles, which divide and tear the church. Nor let us throw away those thoughts and hours on pompous ornaments of learning, on critical or polite studies, or curious and artificial works, which should be devoted to matters of more sacred importance.

If we are engaged in trades, manufactures, or merchandize in the world, let us shew all industry, and honest labour and care, and thus walk with God, *every man in his calling wherein he is called,* till the providence of God evidently leads him to other work; 1 *Cor.* vii. 24. And thus we may refute the calumnies of those who would seek all occasions to reflect upon us for our stricter profession of religion. There are many encouraging promises given to diligence in the word of God. I shall mention but one at present that agrees with my present subject. Prov. xxii. 29. *Seest thou a man diligent in his business, he shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean men.* That is, "his good report and his reputation shall grow and increase, that he shall be brought into more honourable company, and to a more exalted station."

If we are servants, let us devote our time and thoughts to the business which our superiors have entrusted us with, and seek their interest with an honest soul. If we are children and scholars under instruction, let us apply our minds to learn the things we

are taught, and attend to the instructions of those who teach us. Every one of us have our proper work, which demands our application to it.

There are many enemies to this virtue, many practices inconsistent with the character of diligence, as it is celebrated and recommended in the word of God.

First, Sloth or laziness stands foremost in this rank. Surely the powers of our mind and body were never made to be useless. *Go to the ant, thou sluggard*, and learn industry of that little animal. Can we think we were born to be cumberers of the ground, and mere burdens of the earth we dwell on? Let us shake off this stupid and infamous humour, let us rise to an active life, and answer the ends of our creation. And for the same reason it is, that there ought to be a restraint put upon an excess of sleep and slumber. You know the character of the drowsy wretch, that turns from side to side *upon his bed, as a heavy door upon its hinges;* and *the sluggard*, who with folded hands sits still and lets the weeds grow over his corn; but these men shall be *clothed with rags;* Prov. xxi. 14.

Secondly, Luxury, and an intemperate love of pleasure, is another enemy to diligence in our callings. It is an odious character that is given to the inhabitants of Crete by one of their own poets; and the Spirit of God confirms the truth of it; Titus i. 12. *The Cretans are evil beasts, slow bellies;* so shamefully engaged in gluttony and the luxury of the palate, that they render themselves heavy, stupid, and unfit for business: A lazy generation of men, that have much more inclination to eat and drink, and live like brutes, than to employ themselves in any honest labour, that is worthy of human nature, or becomes a man.

Under the same reproof I may justly bring an excessive indulgence of sports or recreations, beyond what is necessary for the refreshment of nature, and the recruit of our spirits, in order to fulfil duty with more diligence: This was intimated in a former discourse. It is but a character of ill report, when a man is too often found in the place of sports and unnecessary diversions, while he ought to be in his shop, or in other proper business of his life. Prov. xxi. 27. "*He that loveth pleasure, shall be a poor man; and he that loves wine and oil*, feastings and entertainments, *he shall not be rich.*"

Thirdly, A tattling humour, excessive talking, and an idle inquisitive impertinence, are great enemies also to that industry, that is now recommended to us. Solomon assures us, that though there is *profit in all labour*, yet *the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury;* Prov. xiv. 23. And he redoubles it upon our ears, that a *prating fool shall fall;* Prov. x. 8, 10. There are some persons that love to talk of any thing, or every thing, besides their own business; like foolish children that turn every page of their books, and flutter a little about every part of them, besides where their lesson is. Every moving feather is ready to seize the fancy of these triflers, this fickle and talkative race of men: They are but taller children. Every little story entertains their idle inclination, and gives them fresh employment to tell it over again. They had rather do any thing than the duty of the present hour; they spend their time like the *inhabitants of Athens, in little else but hearing or telling some new thing.*

Some of these persons are ready to intermingle themselves with every man's concernments, uncalled and undesired: They search into the secrets of families, in order to gratify a wicked humour, to spread abroad and publish some private scandal. *They*

creep into houses, to make make mischief there, and by *tattling* and repeating matters of contest, *they separate very friends*, and raise angry quarrels in peaceful families; *Prov.* xvii. 9. Such persons seem to deserve the public censure of the magistrate, in the opinion of the apostle Peter; 1 Peter iv. 15. *But let none of you*, that are christians, *suffer as an evil-doer, or as a busy-body in other men's matters.* He himself once fell under the censure of Christ our Lord, for this inquisitive and needless curiosity. *John* xxi. 21, 22. When St. Peter had received a prophecy from his master concerning his own martyrdom, he had also an express notice what his own business was, *viz.* to *follow* his master. But Peter had a mind to know what should become of John too; Lord, says he, and *what shall this man do* or suffer? *What if I will*, says our blessed Lord, *that he tarry till I come again? What is that to thee?* Is that thy business, Peter, to know what shall befal John? Mind thy own duty, and *follow thou me.* A wise and divine rebuke from our risen Saviour! After this, St. Peter well knew how to censure such impertinence, and to reprove *busy-bodies.*

Of the same mind is the apostle Paul. He advises women how to behave themselves, that they may not fall under this charge. *Let them guide the house*, says he, and employ themselves in domestic affairs; for if they neglect this work, *they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not;* gathering up matter for slander of their neighbours at their next visit, where every one is ashamed to be silent, and therefore each is ready to furnish the company with their share. But this practice, in the opinion of the sacred writer, furnishes the adversary with daily occasion to slander christianity, and to *speak reproachfully* of the gospel, and it is a thing of *very ill fame;* 1 Tim. v. 13, 14.

II. A public spirit is another thing of good report. Though christians must be diligent in their business, yet they should not confine all their cares within the narrow circle of self, but have a hearty solicitude for the welfare of the nation in which they dwell, for the neighbours among whom they inhabit, for the church of Christ in the world, and extend their concern to the happiness of mankind. The apostle directs Timothy to *make supplications, prayers, and intercessions for all men*, and to take such a satisfaction in the mercies they receive, as to *give thanks* to God upon their account; 1 *Tim.* ii. 1. He exhorts the Ephesians to *prayer and supplication for all the saints;* Eph. vi. 18. And what he taught, he also practised in an eminent and glorious manner; *the care of all the churches came daily upon him:* And you find him in the beginning of his epistles lifting up his petitions and his praises to heaven continually for the churches to whom he writes.

We should rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep, and share with our fellow-christians in their joys and their sorrows, that we may thereby double their joys, and lighten the weight of their sorrows by a blessed sympathy. *Rom.* xii. 15. We should *bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ;* Gal. vi. 2. And in 1 *Cor.* x. 24. he saith, "*Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth, or welfare;*" that is, "Let no man be so wholly swallowed up in his own profit and peace, as utterly to neglect the peace and profit of his neighbour." But though this be so honourable and becoming a practice, yet it has ever been too much neglected, even among the professors of the gospel; for St. Paul tells the Philippians, that Timothy was a singular instance of this good quality; Phil. ii, 20, 21. *I have no man like*

minded, who will naturally care for your state; for all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

Some may be ready to raise an objection here, and say, "How is this consistent with the former character and practice which I recommended, *namely, that every man mind his own business?*"

I grant that this ought generally to be our first care, that we fulfil the duties of our own particular station well, and see to it, that ourselves and our household be supported: This is usually the loudest call of providence, for *he that provides not for those of his own house*, when it is in his power, does not answer the demands of christianity, but is worse than an *infidel, or one that has denied the faith;* 1 Tim. v. 8. But there are many sacred and civil services may be done for the neighbourhood, the church, and the nation, without any culpable hinderance to our own affairs. So much time may be easily redeemed from sloth and slumber, from useless and impertinent conversation, as the public may call for at our hands. And when there is a day of distress or trouble come upon our friends, upon the land wherein we dwell, or the churches of Christ in the world, when virtue and religion are in sinking circumstances, we are called sometimes to lay out a larger part of our time and strength, our interest and our substance, for the welfare of the public, which otherwise perhaps might be due to ourselves, and our own family. In such cases as these, christian prudence must direct us how to distinguish wisely, and determine how far this self-denial is to be exercised, in order to promote the happiness of mankind, and the public honour of Christ. This is *a thing of good report* in the church and in the world, and it will turn to our own honour in the day of the Lord.

But let no man deceive himself, and vainly imagine that he may lay claim to the honour of a public spirit, because he spends half his days in places of public resort, and in fruitless enquiries and chatterings about the affairs of government, and the business of the state; perhaps he extends his care also to Muscovy and Persia, as well as Great Britain, while the care of his shop is a little thing with him, the business of his study or counting-house is forgotten, and his family complains of woeful neglect: Nor are public affairs mended by all his impertinence.

If this Sermon be too long, it is best divided here.

III. Regularity in the conduct of our affairs is a becoming character, and will gain us a good name amongst men. As there are many and various duties that belong to the natural, the civil, and the religious life; it is a piece of eminent wisdom to appoint proper seasons and rules for the performance of them; nor should we think it beneath us, as far as possible, to govern ourselves by those rules, and keep to our own appointed seasons; otherwise all our affairs will be ready to run into confusion; one duty will be apt to intrench upon another, and some of the duties of life or godliness will be neglected, or quite forsaken, under a pretence of want of time.

One thing that intrenches upon the regular hours and orders of life, is a trifling and dilatory temper, putting off necessary business, whether it be work or devotion, till the last moment; and then, if the least accident intervenes, we have not left ourselves sufficient time to perform it. These are the persons who are frequently found in a hurry and confusion, because they have neglected to do the proper work in the proper season. Their business is always done in haste, and often unfinished. These are they who keep

no appointments, who are seldom true to their hour, who make their friends wait for them upon all occasions, who often create uneasiness to all the company, and put a whole family out of order. What an unbecoming behaviour is this! What an ill aspect it bears! especially if these delayers are in any degree inferior, or the younger parts of a house. And yet it might easily be prevented, by taking the first opportunity for every business. O it is an excellent, a golden rule, "Never leave that till to-morrow, which may be done to-day, nor trust the business of this hour to the care of the next," for the next is not mine.

When servants are of this dilatory and trifling humour, they waste their master's time perpetually, and put their superiors to many inconveniences. They prevent one another's business, as well as neglect their own. You would wonder how they could spend three or four hours in a common errand, and make a family wait half a day for a message, that might be dispatched in half an hour. They cannot keep their eyes or their ears from attending to every object they meet; their endless curiosity of enquiry, and their irresistible inclination to talk of every thing that does not concern them, is an everlasting hinderance to their proper work. This active sort of idleness is much harder to be cured than that of the slow and stupid kind; and you see it belongs to the poor as well as the rich; though it is a matter of disreputation and infamy to both.

Persons of this unhappy conduct, whether of high or low degree, are in great danger of trifling in the most sacred and divine concernments, as well as in common life. They sometimes manage their spiritual and immortal affairs in the same dilatory manner, but with more dreadful and fatal consequences. They put off repentance from day to day and delay their solemn transactions with God, till sickness seizes them, or till death approaches: Then what hurry of spirit! What dreadful confusion of soul! What tumults and terrors overwhelm them! And it is well if the matters of their salvation be not unfinished at the last hour, and themselves made miserable to all eternity, because they trifled away life and time.

A second enemy to this regular conduct of life, and which indeed is derived from the former, is this, an inversion of the order of nature, and a change of the seasons which God hath appointed for business and rest. I confess this is not now-a-days a matter of ill report in itself, however contrary it be to the laws of nature and the creation: But it is attended with many irregularities, and sometimes with infamous practices too: And therefore I would spend one page to give it an ill name, and to bring it into just discredit.

God has made every thing beautiful in its season; Eccles. iii. 11. *The sun ariseth;—and man goeth forth to his work until the evening;* Psalm civ. 22, 23. It is more natural and healthful to pursue the concerns of life, as much as possible, by day-light. Midnight studies are prejudicial to nature: A painful experience calls me to repent of the faults of my younger years, and there are many before me have had the same call to repentance. Wearing out the lightsome hours in sleep, is an unnatural waste of sun-beams. There is no light so friendly to animal nature as that of the sun. Midnight assemblies, festivals, and entertainments, exhaust the spirits, and make a needless profusion of the necessaries of life: They carry a very ill appearance with them, even where no wickedness is indulged, they are practices of evil report, and deserve censure and shame.

It is no honour to our whole nation, that we have learned the fashion of doing nothing in the morning; among persons of mode the day often begins at noon: The hours of

business are grown much later among us than our forefathers could bear. They knew the worth of day-light.

In some things indeed we are bound to comply with custom, or we must forsake the world; for a few can never stem the general tide, or reform a degenerate age: And there are some few trades and employments which demand labour at night. But in our general conduct we should endeavour to act more agreeably to the laws of creation and nature, and to reduce families to a little better order, wheresoever we have power and influence. Surely it can be no great hardship for any persons in health to begin their day with the rising sun, for almost half the year. We should not think it sufficient to get up a little before noon, nor should we turn the morning of God and nature into midnight, nor make the decline of the sun serve for our morning work.

I would not be thought in this page to reflect upon the weak, the sickly, and the aged parts of mankind, whose nature may require longer sleep, and a larger degree of rest to recruit their spirits: Nor do I accuse those unhealthy persons, who can get no slumber till the night is half spent, and are thereby constrained, merely for the sake of health, to let their bed intrench upon so many hours of day-light: Yet I persuade myself, that if these last would but bear the inconveniences they complain of for a week or two, if they would break off their morning slumber early, and early betake themselves to rest, nature would quickly learn a better habit, the reformation would soon grow easy: And perhaps this might advance their health in a sensible manner, beyond all their old indulgences, or their present expectations.

An excessive love of company, an affectation of going abroad, a delight in wine and strong drink, are the third sort of enemies to that regularity and order which I am now recommending. Such practices are censured in the word of God; I have called the prophet Isaiah, in a former discourse, to witness against the drunkard; but I must ask leave to cite the same text again, against the wasters of time in taverns, or meaner drinking-houses. *Wo to them that go to their cups in a morning:* This throws all the business of the day out of order; and sometimes they are tempted to continue until night, or at least they return thither again, and stay till wine inflames them; then all the follies of life play their parts; but they forget religion, and *regard not the work, nor worship of the Lord;* Isaiah v. 11, 12. How often has it been found, that the religion of the closet, as well as that of the family, hath been shortened and omitted, and by degrees thrust out of doors, and forgotten, for want of shaking off every impediment, and confining ourselves to proper seasons. We intend to fulfil our duties, but we intend it at random, without keeping any time for it: And thus some households, that would be called christians, live without God in the world. They that *tarry long at wine*, or in any needless company, and lengthen out the hours of their needless absence from home, may count themselves guilty of the several disorders that are committed in the family; which would be rectified, or entirely prevented by the presence of the master.

I confess sometimes necessary business detains a person beyond his usual and appointed hour: there must also be some allowances made for the unhappy engagements which may attend some particular callings in the world. Our own consciences must be the final judges in this case: But let us be faithful and honest, and frequently make an enquiry, whether our conduct be regular or no; and whether it be the necessity of affairs that intrenches upon the seasons of duty, or whether it be a careless

indifference of spirit. Good orders in a household, and regular hours for all the duties and enjoyments of life, give beauty and ornament to life itself: Like a musical instrument, where every string is wound up to strike its proper note, and the skilful musician keeps his time, how does it entertain the ear with innocent pleasure, and refresh the heart, when practised at proper seasons! Such a family appears like a Bethel, a house of God, and the Lord himself delights to dwell in it. O may it be my lot and portion always to inhabit in such a tabernacle, till I lay down this body in the dust, and my soul arises to the well-ordered family of heaven!

IV. Sorting ourselves with the best company is another beautiful part of christian conduct, and procures a good report. By the best of company, I do not intend the greatest or the richest, nor the most ingenious and witty; for there are some of these that are vain and vile enough; but the best in my esteem, are those who are most virtuous, most pious, most knowing and wise, or those that are seeking after virtue, piety, and wisdom. Thus by conversation with the one, we may be always doing good, and with the other we may be always receiving some good. *He that walketh with wise men, shall grow yet wiser; but the companion of fools shall be destroyed;* Prov. xiii. 20. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked, evil communications corrupt good manners.* A heathenish poet and an inspired apostle agree in these words; 1 *Cor.* xv. 33. If we are engaged much in converse with those that are light, and frothy, and vain, we shall gain the same levity of temper. If we talk much with the profane, we shall be tempted now and then to a profane expression too. "Can a man touch pitch, and not be defiled?" Can a man pass through the flames, and his clothes not be singed? Neither can those that walk frequently and delightfully amongst light, vain, intemperate persons, escape being defiled by them.

It is true, the apostle tells us, if we would utterly seclude ourselves from all manner of converse with persons of ill character, we must abandon society, and almost *go out of the world;* 1 Cor. v. 10. But the meaning of the apostle, when he bids us avoid evil companions, is, as much as possible, to shun their company; see therefore that it is a necessary call of providence leads you amongst them; otherwise abstain. Those who give themselves up to be entertained by every one that will entertain them, those who will walk with every companion, and will herd with every drove, they are in danger of being corrupted with any vice, and of learning every ill principle. But if through the grace of God, we should escape the infection, of error or sin, yet we shall lose our good name by keeping ill company. A delight in base and worthless companions, will make the world judge that we are like them: Whereas we shall gain a part of the good character of our associates and acquaintance, and derive honour from them, if we are so happy as to have friendship and intimacy with persons of piety, learning, and virtue. May these be the friends of my choice, and my companions for ever!

V. Abstinence from the utmost bounds of things lawful, is another practice of good report amongst men. It is but a narrow line in many cases, that divides between a lawful and a sinful practice; and if we will venture, as near as possible to the very borders of what we think lawful, we shew too great an inclination to the bordering iniquity, and we shall often be in danger of treading on forbidden ground. If we indulge the love of pleasure, or give an unguarded loose to any unlawful passion, we shall find it difficult to withhold the violence of corrupt nature from transgressing the

lawful bounds. If a wild horse be indulged in his career, it is well if he does not break the reins, and fling the rider. It is a foolish fancy to walk upon the edge of a precipice, unless we could infallibly secure our head from giddiness, or our feet from stumbling. It is much safer therefore to keep a proper distance from fatal danger. The world will give us but an ill character, and say very justly concerning us, that we are not much afraid of vice, if we dare rashly venture into temptation.

It is the advice of the Holy Spirit and St. Paul to the christian converts, *Abstain from all appearance of evil;* 1 Thess. v. 22. And the apostle Jude requires us to *hate even the garments that are spotted with the flesh;* Jude, ver. 23. Every thing that looks like guilt should forbid our approach, we should choose to stand afar off, and withhold our desires, lest we defile our consciences, and bring a blemish upon our christian character. What an honour is it to any man, when it is said concerning him, " He has a tender soul, and a conscience that will not stretch to the length of the loose customs and fashions of the times; he dares not allow himself all the liberties that are innocent and lawful, lest he should wound his own spirit, and his good name, by venturing too near to the borders of iniquity." Let such a temper be our constant guard and ornament.

VI. Following the common practices of the saints in doubtful matters, is another thing of good report, and ought to be so among those that profess the name of Christ: Whether it be in our trade and business, in our apparel, or our visits, in our forms of address to our superiors, or common methods of conversation and civility, of recreation, or entertainment, let the general customs of the saints of the purest ages, or the customs of the purest churches, and the best christians in our own age, be a direction to our practice. *Ask for the good old way,* says the prophet Jeremy, and if we know not what part to choose, let us *go by the footsteps of the flock* of Christ. Enquire what the followers of our Lord have done in past ages, and what the wisest and best of them do in our own age, and this will give us a considerable assistance to determine what ought to be our practice.

In 1 *Cor.* xi. 16. the apostle Paul seems to refer to this general head, for our determination in doubtful matters. When he had been proposing the law of nature, or the order of creation, to direct the man and the woman what sort of coverings they ought to wear, viz. *that a woman ought not to be uncovered, and that a man should not wear long hair;* that is, should not nourish his hair to make it grow long, as women, nor manage it with a nice and effeminate curiosity, he concludes with this sentence, *If any man seem to be contentious,* that is, if any man be not contented with the arguments I have brought, but will carry on contention and dispute, let him remember this decisive argument, that *we have no such custom, nor the churches of God;* we the preachers of the gospel, and the apostles of Christ, have neither found nor approved such sort of customs among the christians where we have lived, nor are they practised in any of the churches of God, which we have heard of.

I will readily allow, that the strict professors of religion in some particular ages of the church, may have generally indulged either some unreasonable scruples, or some unreasonable liberties. There are some practices of evident and undoubted lawfulness, which have been forbidden in severe and dreadful language by some or other of our religious ancestors; such as wearing borrowed hair, or suffering our own to reach the

shoulders; using any thing that borders upon lot or chance, except in matters of sacred or solemn concernment; wishing a friend's health when we drink; practising any part of our civil calling after sun-set on Saturdays, or even calling the months, or the days of the week by names borrowed from the heathens, such as Monday or Tuesday, January or February: Yet in such cases as these, had I lived amongst them, I would have conformed to their customs, and have given no offence; but I would have taken every proper occasion to shew that these were unnecessary scruples.

This was the conduct of St. Paul, in the controversy about eating meats offered to idols; 1 Cor. viii. 8. *Meat commendeth us not to God; for neither if we eat are we the better; neither if we eat not, are we the worse.* There he declares how needless these scruples were; and 1 *Cor.* x. 25. to shew their christian liberty, where no scrupulous person was present and opposed it, he bids them *eat whatsoever is sold in the shambles, asking no questions for conscience sake.* But in both these places he cautions them against offending the weaker brethren, and shews also how afraid he was of giving offence, or acting in their presence contrary to their practices, even though they were built on needless scruples. Verse 13. *I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, if it make my brother to offend;* that is, if it tempt him to grow bold, and venture upon the same food against his conscience. And the apostle practised this self-denial, lest he should *sin against his weak brother*, lest he should *grieve him* by this *uncharitable* licence; as *Rom.* xiv. 15. This holy caution and tenderness of offending the weak, was the constant practice of that blessed saint, who had more knowledge than all of us, but he had more condescension and self-denial too. O that we might all make him our pattern, and practise the charity that we preach so loudly, and profess with such a modern assurance!

There are other practices which might be comprized under this general character, and recommended as *things of good report.* But I must not draw such discourses out to a tiresome length, which perhaps may create but too much pain and uneasiness, by the very sense and subject of which they treat. Yet certainly it is a part of our duty and our interest to know, and meditate, and practise those things that may gain us a good name and reputation in the world, and may brighten our character among the churches of Christ; and to avoid every thing that would blemish our honour, or sink our esteem among wise and good men. What arguments may be drawn from the light of nature to enforce this exhortation, or what more powerful motives are derived from the gospel, to awaken and excite us to the practice of all that is honourable, shall be considered in the next discourse, when I treat of the matters of virtue and praise, which are recommended in the last words of my text.

HYMN FOR SERMON XXIX.

CHRISTIAN MORALITY, viz. THINGS OF GOOD REPORT.

I.

IS it a thing of good report,
To squander life and time away?
To cut the hours of duty short,
While toys and follies waste the day?

II.

To ask and prattle all affairs,
And mind all business but our own?
To live at random, void of cares,
While all things to confusion run?

III.

Doth this become the christian name,
To venture near the tempter's door?
To sort with men of evil fame,
And yet presume to stand secure?

IV.

Am I my own sufficient guard,
While I expose my soul to shame?
Can the short joys of sin reward
The lasting blemish of my name?

V.

O may it be my constant choice
To walk with men of grace below,
'Till I arrive where heavenly joys
And never-fading honours grow!

SERMON XXX.

CHRISTIAN MORALITY, viz. COURAGE AND HONOUR; or, VIRTUE AND PRAISE.

PHILIP. iv. 8.

IF THERE BE ANY VIRTUE, AND IF THERE BE ANY PRAISE, THINK ON THESE THINGS.

Εἴ τις ἀρετὴ καὶ εἴ τις ἔπαινος, &c.

VIRTUE is an honourable and extensive name: It is used by moral writers to include all the duties we owe to *ourselves* or our *fellow-creatures;* such as *sobriety*, *temperance*, *faithfulness*, *justice*, *prudence*, *goodness*, and *mercy;* and the sense of it is sometimes stretched so far, as to comprehend also the duties of religion which we owe to *God.* But let us take notice, that the first and original signification of the word both in the Greek and Latin tongues is much more limited, and it means only *power* or *courage.* The Greek word ἀρετὴ used here by the apostle, is derived from Ἄρης, the name of Mars, or the heathen god of war: And doubtless the most ancient meaning of it amongst the *Greek writers* was *warlike valour*, though in time the *philosophers* enlarged the sense of it to include every moral excellency.

The several places in the New Testament where the word is used, have chief reference to some work of glorious power when it is applied to God, or courage when it refers to men. I wish I could stay here to explain them all, but I must mention one of them, *viz.* 2 *Peter* i. 5. *Add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge temperance*, &c. Virtue is to be added to faith, that is, next to your belief of the gospel, get courage to profess what you believe: It is not to be supposed, that in this place virtue can signify the whole of morality, because the particular virtues of temperance, patience, and charity are named also: And therefore this must signify some part of morality distinct from the rest, *viz.* a strength or fortitude of soul.

And for the same reason the word virtue in my text cannot signify the whole system of moral duties, because St. Paul in the same verse had been recommending truth, justice, and purity or temperance, which are so many pieces of morality; and it is not reasonable to imagine that he brings in a general name that comprehends them all in the midst of so many particulars, which is contrary to the use of all writers, and to his own custom too. I confess if he had said, *if there be any other virtue*, as he does in the like case; *Rom.* xiii. 9. when he had omitted any particular, we might then have understood virtue in the general sense; but now it is evident, that he means a particular excellency, distinct from those before-mentioned; and the word itself requires us to understand a brave, bold, and generous spirit and practice. He recommends to them a great and excellent behaviour, wherein their holy courage may appear, when the call of providence gives a just occasion.

Courage is a virtue which stands in opposition both to fear and shame; and it guards the mind of man from the evil influence of both those passions. The man of courage

has not such a feeling fondness for his flesh nor his estate, as to be afraid to profess his sentiments, or to fulfil his duty at every call of providence, though his estate may suffer damage by it, or his flesh be exposed to pain: Nor has he such a tenderness for his honour, as to secure it with the loss of his innocence. He is not ashamed to appear for virtue in an age of vice and scandal: He stands up boldly for the honour of his God, and ventures a thousand perils rather than wound his conscience, or betray his trust: He dares profess and practise temperance among an herd of drunkards, and purity in the midst of the lewd and unclean: The man of courage can despise the threatenings of the great, and the scoffs of the witty, conscious of his own integrity and truth. He can face and oppose the world with all its terrors, and travel onwards in the paths of piety without fear. *The righteous man is bold as a lion;* Prov. xxviii. 1.

Now it is the apostle's advice to the Philippian converts, that whensoever there is any just occasion given to exert their fortitude, whether it be in the defence of the rights of mankind, and the liberties of their country, or in vindication of the cause of God or virtue, let the christian take those opportunities to speak his mind, and shew his courage; let him make it appear that the meek of the earth may sometimes resist the mighty oppressors, that the followers of the Lamb dare to oppose the wild beasts of the age, and are ready to sacrifice all that human nature calls dear for the service of God, or the welfare of their fellow-creatures.

The heathen world may derive some arguments from the light of reason, and some perhaps from more corrupt and selfish principles, to awaken their valour, and to raise heroes amongst them: But there is nothing among all the writings of the philosophers, or the examples of their real or their fabled heroes, that can raise and support so illustrious and divine a courage, as the principles and the patterns with which the gospel of Christ has furnished us; whether we look to Jesus, the founder of our religion, the Son of God in our nature, or to his apostles, or to the primitive martyrs, among whom some of the weaker sex and the weaker age, have outshone the glory, and darkened the lustre of all the great men of heathenism.

What blessed views hath the gospel given us of heaven and future happiness, to animate our zeal, and to engage us to the boldest efforts of goodness! What promises of almighty power to assist us in our sacred attempts, and to bear up our spirits! What rich and infallible assurances have we in the word of God to support our highest expectations, that if *we are faithful to the death, we shall receive a crown of life!* Rev. ii. 10. And Jesus our forerunner hath already taken possession of all these prizes and glories to reward the conquerors.

Shall we sink and despond at any dark appearances? Shall our spirits fail us in the midst of duty, when we have so many divine motives to valour and holy fortitude? Methinks there should be nothing too hard for a christian to undertake or suffer, when God and providence call him to it. I confess that flesh and blood are frail and feeble: Animal nature overwhelms the soul with its shudderings, and forbids the execution of the bravest purposes. It is only grace, divine grace, that can strengthen the trembling christian, and make him venture through dangers and death in the way to the heavenly crown. It is this gives power to the promises, and makes the saint believe the performance. It is this sets heaven before his eyes, and gives it such an attractive influence, such a sovereign conquest over all his fears; it even braces the sinews of nature, and exalts the spirits to despise danger and pain. What wonders of holy fortitude might a

christian perform, if the eye of his faith were kept always open, and firmly fixed on those bright and everlasting invisibles!

But I shall enlarge no farther on this argument of christian courage, and I am the more inclined to dismiss this subject at present, having reserved some discourses on it for another season.*

I proceed therefore to the last exhortation in my text, *If there be any praise*, any actions that deserve honour amongst men, *think on these things*, engage yourselves in the practice, and obtain the honour. The praise which the apostle here recommends, may be described as Cicero, the famous Roman orator, describes glory; it is, "The concurrent and unanimous commendation of good men, or the general voice of wise and uncorrupted judges, concerning any eminent practice of virtue."

The holy apostle had just before recommended things of good report, and now he exhorts them to the practice of laudable actions, or things that merit praise. The difference between these two is this: a good report signifies a clear and unblemished character, fair reputation among men, a good name among those with whom our daily acquaintance lies, and our civil conversation and business. But praise implies a considerable degree of applause or honour, obtained by some eminent actions, or some extraodinary instances of wisdom, courage, or goodness. A man that has never attained to any great degree of excellence above his neighbours, may yet have a fair reputation in the world: But the word praise seems to imply a great and honourable name, as well as a good one.

I shall mention but two general instances, wherein we may suppose the apostle recommends to us the practice of those things that are laudable: One is, an extraordinary conduct in common affairs; the other is an improvement of the seasons, or occasions of extraordinary virtue.

I. It is a thing praise-worthy to labour after an extraordinary conduct and uncommon excellence in our common affairs of life, to excel all others, in the things that relate to our station in the world. Let each of us search and enquire, what is it within our reach that shines brightest among men, and then pursue it with vigour.

If a person, who professes religion in the strictest manner, and in the purest forms, be made a magistrate or public officer, let him do something extraordinary for the public welfare, if it be possible, and merit the public thanks and praise of the community. So if a man be called to the ministry of the gospel, let him imitate the blessed apostle in zeal for Christ; as in 1 Cor. xv. 10. *I laboured more—than they all.* Let there be no bounds to our desires of excellence, and our zeal for the salvation of men. *Covet earnestly the best gifts*, says the apostle, 1 *Cor.* xii. 31. and animate them with the noblest graces. There is a holy emulation wherein we may vie with one another, and each of us get as near perfection as possible. This is praise-worthy. I told you before, that magistrates or ministers must be diligent in their work to gain a good report, but they must double that diligence to obtain special praise.

So in the most common employments of life, and the management of daily affairs abroad or at home, we should aspire to be patterns of every thing that is good and laudable, that we may all be able to say as St. Paul, *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ;* 1 Cor. xi. 1. Am I a master? Let me have a holy ambition to be the

* See the two following sermons.

best of masters, and by an excellent conduct constrain all my servants to praise and love me; except such vulgar and brutal souls that no kindness can engage, no merit can oblige, and no virtue can influence. Am I a servant? Let my zeal for my master's interest exceed all my fellows, and my faithfulness and diligence in every duty extort honour even from those who envy me, and deserve the esteem and love of those that are above me. If I am an artificer, and God hath given me any superior talents or capacities, I should not employ those superior talents in trifles, but use them to some most valuable purposes, for the benefit of mankind, beyond what former ages have known. I should promote useful knowledge, if I am a philosopher, and carry it on farther than my fathers have done. These are some instances wherein we may perform actions of praise that are becoming a man or a christian.

II. It is a thing praise-worthy to improve all the seasons and occasions of extraordinary virtue, to seize on those special opportunities which providence now and then may give us to exert uncommon degrees of wisdom or mercy, activity or courage.

We are always required to be faithful to our rulers, and kind to our neighbours and friends: But when our king or our country is in some imminent danger, when some threatening mischief hangs over a family, or a city, when our friend or brother, or even a stranger, is in immediate peril of life, there may be a glorious occasion for some great and generous exercise of loyalty, fortitude, compassion, or love, to save a friend or a stranger, a prince or a nation. All the world shall agree to praise the man who performs that noble service.

We are bound always to be liberal, and to give to the poor, but sometimes we have an opportunity to exercise that grace of liberality in a more ample and generous manner, so as to deserve and obtain an honourable name: As when a great number of distressed wretches come to the city or place where we dwell, or when some general calamity involves all our poor neighbours, and reduces them to great straits, then we should exercise bounty beyond the common measure: Thus a christian shall have the honour of relieving the poor more than heathens do, or those who make no profession of godliness.

So in the practice of charity and forgiveness, Jesus our Lord requires us to forgive our enemies, and to do good to those that hate, and abuse, and persecute us: But when it lies in our power to do a most considerable service to a person that has done us the highest injury, then there is a special providence calling us to perform a glorious action of praise. Such was the character of that great and good man archbishop Cranmer, of whom it is said, if any man had done him an injury, he would ever afterward be his friend.

In short, whensoever an occasion arises to give an eminent and glorious proof of generosity or compassion, of gratitude or goodness, of zeal for God, or love to men, it is the apostle's advice, that a christian should seize the golden hour, and not suffer a heathen to prevent or exceed him. And among christians, let those who profess the severest virtue, and the purest methods of christianity, be the persons who seize most of these opportunities to perform actions worthy of praise. But when there is any thing mean and base, scandalous and sordid, appears in the world, as it never should be said that a christian has done it, so neither would I ever have such a scandal fall upon any person who professes the strictest forms of godliness.

I come in the next place to consider, what arguments may be drawn from the light of reason, to excite us to actions of good report, and such as are worthy of special praises;

for in the foregoing discourse I told you, that I should join the arguments or motives together, which belong to both these exhortations.

I. If a person practises things of good report, and acquires to himself reputation and praise amongst men, he does himself and his family a considerable kindness by it. If a man has not a good name, he can neither expect to be entertained in any society with pleasure, nor to receive any special benefits from the world. A person of ill report is rather hated than beloved, he is shunned and avoided rather than desired, and his neighbours will treat him with neglect rather than assistance. His very name is mentioned with disgrace instead of praise. Whereas, on the other hand, a man whose excellent character has deserved a good report and honour among his fellow-citizens, has every one ready to invite him to their company, and willing to reach out to him their friendly hand when he is fallen into danger or distress.

Besides, such a person lays up honour for his household, and provides the friendship of mankind for the help of his family in generations yet to come. It is confessed indeed, that the spirit of the world has too much baseness in it, and too great a neglect of real merit; yet when a man has deserved exceeding well of his country, and acquired any special degrees of praise or renown amongst them, the world is not yet quite so brutal and degenerate, but that it has given many instances of bounty and goodness to the posterity of a man of honour. *His name shall be had in everlasting remembrance, and the generation of the upright shall be blessed;* Psalm cxii. 2, 6.

II. A man that has obtained a good report and honour in the world, by many reputable actions, is capable of much greater service both to God and his fellow-creatures. If we have gained esteem and reputation among men, they will be more ready to hearken to our counsel, and comply with our advice. We shall have more influence on mankind, both to promote the honour of God, and the benefit of men. A word that we speak, will make deeper impression, and be attended with greater success. A word or a look of Cato among the Romans, would do more to restrain vice, and to shame the vicious, than the frown of an emperor.

III. There is so much real and inward satisfaction arises from a good character, obtained by a life of virtue and piety, that a man who knows the pleasure of it, would not renounce the practices which may attain it. I confess it is a more important matter to secure a good conscience than a good name, and to obtain praise in the sight of God, than in the lips of men: But where both these are joined together by the favour of divine providence, our virtue and piety has a larger reward, and our natures are so framed and composed, that we cannot help taking some satisfaction in it. Prov. xv. 30. *A good report maketh the bones fat;* that is, as one expresses it, it revives the heart to such a degree, as renders the body more healthful and vigorous.

Methinks those persons have something very degenerate in them, and their conduct is a little unnatural, who seem to have lost the very desire of a good name or reputation. I cannot but wonder to hear a person boast of his scorn and contempt of it in such language as this; "I will pursue my own designs, I will gratify and please myself, and I care not what the world says of me." Surely if such language did become a christian, the scripture would not be so solicitous to recommend a good name and things of good report.

This naturally leads me to consider, what influence christianity has to excite us to the practice of reputable actions, and such as deserve honour amongst men.

Here we may first take notice, how often the scripture proposes honour as a reward of goodness and virtue. Our Saviour promises it to those that are humble and condescending: If thou art ready at some entertainment to seat thyself in a lower place, Luke xiv. 10. *the master of the feast shall exalt thee, and thou shalt have worship in the presence of those that sit at meat with thee; for he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* St. Paul tells the christians, *do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise from the ruling power, for magistrates are appointed for the praise of them that do well;* 1 Peter ii. 14. Solomon proposes the same motive; Prov. iv. 7, 8. *Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom;—she shall bring thee to honour when thou dost embrace her.* The apostle recommends often to the christians of his day, a good name amongst infidels and heathens, a good report of them which are without; and he mentions it as an eminent character of a companion of Titus, that his praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches; 2 *Cor.* viii. 18. And it is recorded to the honour of Demetrius by St. John, that he had *a good report of all men, even of the truth itself;* 3 John, verse 12. Christians and heathens speak well of him, and his good character is just and true. Nor must it be forgotten, that in this little collection of advices in my text, the apostle twice recommends such practices as deserve honour among men, *viz.* things of good report, and things worthy of praise.

Surely if we did but consider how much our Saviour and his gospel gain by it in the world, we should ever be engaged in works of good report, and practising that which may redound to our praise, for hereby we spread a good savour of the name of Christ wide in the world, and our holy religion reaps sensible honour and advantage by it. When the name of any person is celebrated amongst men for something great and useful, when his deeds are mentioned with public praise, it is quickly enquired "What religion is he of?" Is he a heathen? Then the glory will be ascribed to idolaters, and the honour perhaps be given to their idols. Is he a christian? Then the name of Christ our Lord will gain reputation by it, and men will speak more favourably of that doctrine which was adorned with such eminent virtue and piety. This did unknown service to the gospel in the first propagation of it, when it appeared in the world, that the characters and the lives of christians were lovely, that their works were all goodness, that they were persons of an excellent spirit, and obtained a good report among their heathen neighbours: They saw their good works, and were thereby led, by degrees, to glorify their heavenly Father, and their Saviour.

And where there is any separation made from the public worship of a nation, with a profession to reform any corruptions of doctrine or practice, how much honour would be done to these reforming principles, and how much service to this interest, if every one that is engaged in it were always practising things of good report, and aiming at some eminency and uncommon goodness in their various stations of life. If therefore we have any love for Christ our Lord, if we have any zeal for his glory, if we have any regard to the honour of the gospel, or if we would bring any credit to the particular profession we make, let us set a severe watch upon ourselves against every thing that would blemish our character in the world, and let us aspire to all superior excellencies that are within our reach, that we may be *to the praise of the glory of his grace, who has made us acceptable in the beloved;* Eph. i. 6.

It is necessary here to remove two or three objections out of the way, that may seem to attend this exhortation of the apostle.

The first is this. If a good name be so valuable a thing, why should there be such a woe denounced by our Saviour against those that have the good word of all men? *Luke* vi. 26. *Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you; for so did their fathers to the false prophets.*

I. Answer. That the design of our Saviour is to shew, that no man in a degenerate and corrupt age, can attain the high esteem and hearty good word of all persons in the world, but those who are time-servers and hypocrites, who can suit themselves to every company, and comply with every change of the times; who can profess to be religious, and yet indulge themselves or others in the practice of their secret iniquities; such were the false prophets of old. Such a person as this may for a short season get all men to speak well of him: The drunkards will commend him, for he can be drunk as well as they; and the swearer, for he can join with them in swearing; and the men of piety may be deceived in him, and give him a good report, for his tongue is tipped with religious language, and he seems to be a saint; but in reality he is an universal hypocrite, and true to nothing. Our Lord Jesus hates and censures such a character as this is, and this is the design of his reproof. Again,

II. Let it be noted, that this sort of sinners can hold the good word of all men but for a very short time. The drunkards, the profane, and the lewd, may caress a man for a season who complies with their vices; yet when they hear that he pretends to be religious among persons of piety, they will speak evil of him in abundance, and brand him for an hypocrite, which is a more loathsome name; and his pious acquaintance, when they shall find out his practices of secret wickedness, they will justly fix the same odious character upon him: Thus he who before had the good word of all men, shall then be loaded with public scandal and infamy. I add further,

III. That a good report signifies a good character and honourable reputation among all wise and good men, upon the account of valuable qualities, and the exercise of virtue and goodness; and where a man manages his affairs with an excellent conduct in this respect, and keeps himself without a blemish, he will command some degree of esteem and reverence from the viler part of the world: His good name will be general, though perhaps not universal; and if the wicked world finds occasion to speak evil of him in any thing, it is only in the matters of his God, and his exemplary practice of piety. This thought introduces

The second objection, *viz.* If a good name amongst men be so desirable, why does our Saviour say, *Matt.* v. 11, 12. *Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and shall speak all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake; then rejoice ye, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you.*

Answer. It is supposed that the evil which men speak of you is false; for so our Saviour expresseth it, *when they shall speak all manner of evil against you, falsely, for my sake.* They shall scandalize you as being ill men, merely because you are christians; and throw upon you many odiums, which your practice has never deserved, on purpose to expose the christian religion. The apostle Peter agrees with our Lord Jesus Christ in the same design; 1 *Pet.* iii. 16. Keep *a good conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you as evil-doers, they may be ashamed while they falsely accuse your good conversation in Jesus Christ.*

Now when it appears to be pure hatred of God and of goodness, of Christ and his gospel, for which you are reproached, then you have cause to rejoice, because Christ is on your side: So he was reproached in the days of his flesh, so the prophets that went before him, and so the apostles that succeeded him; 1 Pet. iv. 14. *The Spirit of God and of glory resteth upon you, for on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.* Happy are ye, for Christ and you are joined together in the same cause; and you who have glorified him on earth, shall be glorified together with him in heaven.

The third objection is this; If praise amongst men be lawful to be sought, how comes it to pass that there are so many reproofs given to those who seek the praise of men? How can these scriptures be reconciled with some others that are cited before to encourage actions worthy of praise? How often does our Saviour severely rebuke the pharisees for this practice, that *they do their good works to be seen of men?* Matt. vi. 2, 5, 16. John v. 44.

Answer. It is evident that these hypocrites whom our Saviour reproves, neglected all inward piety before God, and practised the outward forms of godliness merely to gain the *praise of men,* they *loved* and *valued* it *more than the praise of God;* John xii. 43. They received honour of one another, and had no concern about that superior blessing, that divine esteem and approbation which God only can bestow, and which only would stand them in stead hereafter. Where the praise of God is inconsistent with the praise of men, there it is evident we must despise the censures or the praises of the world, and seek the divine approbation only: But where these two benefits may be happily conjoined, we are not bound to separate them. God never requires us to seek infamy and reproach, or to abandon that honour that belongs to truth and goodness.

But that I may more effectually guard every christian against all the dangers and temptations that may attend a good name, and honour in the world, I would conclude the discourse with these four advices:

I. Make not the praise of men your chief aim or design in any thing you do: But let it be your first and chiefest care to approve yourselves to God and your own consciences. Do those actions that are worthy of praise; and whether the world acknowledge it or no, your souls will find inward peace, your labour of love shall not be forgotten of God, *he is faithful who hath promised;* Heb. x. 23.

II. If you are so happy as to obtain the esteem of men, set a guard upon your soul, lest pride and vanity take occasion to arise and shew themselves. Have a care lest Satan the tempter gain an advantage against you by the fruits of your virtue and the eminence of your graces. Pride is such a cursed twining weed, it will sometimes root itself in virtue and honour, it will grow up to an equal height, and make its supporters wither and die.

III. Let all the honour you acquire among men, be improved to the honour of your God and Saviour. If you make your own applause your great end, Jesus will say to you another day, as he did once to the pharisees, *Verily I say unto you, ye have your reward;* Matt. vi. 2, 5, 16. The praise of men will be your whole recompence, and there is nothing more remains for you. Whensoever therefore you receive applause from the world, make the world know that it was not the man but the christian that practised the virtue, and gained the praise. *Not I, but the grace of God which was with me;* 1 Cor. xv. 10. If you so manage all your laudable actions, that Jesus Christ and his name may gain some honour by them, this shall turn to your praise and glory in the day of Christ, as well as to the praise of God your Saviour.

IV. When the providence of God and his grace have favoured you so far as to gain a good character in the world, have a care of every thing that may impeach your honour, or sully your reputation. Remember the lesson that Solomon teaches you from so contemptible a thing as a dead fly; a few of them will *cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour; so does a little folly disgrace a man who is in reputation for wisdom and honour;* Eccles. x. 1. The blemish that arises from one base or foolish action will darken a bright character, and cancel the honour that has cost the labour of many years to acquire: And the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ will suffer much by it also, if those persons once descend to folly and disgrace, who have risen high before in the regions of wisdom and public esteem.

Happy those christians who walk closely with God to the end of life, and keep their garments unspotted! When they die, they leave a perfumed name behind them to the churches, and to the families to which they have belonged; and perhaps they bequeath a lasting honour to religion as long as the world shall stand. Such has been the character of some of the saints in ancient ages of the world, such in the elder and later days of christianity: The brightness and savour of their good name abides to this day amongst us, as an ornament to religion, and a rich perfume to the gospel of our Lord Jesus. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. *Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMON XXX.

CHRISTIAN MORALITY, viz. COURAGE AND HONOUR.

I.

DO I believe what Jesus saith,
And think his gospel true?
Lord, make me bold to own my faith,
And practise virtue too.

II.

Suppress my shame, subdue my fear,
Arm me with heavenly zeal,
That I may make thy power appear,
And works of praise fulfil.

III.

If men shall see my virtue shine,
And spread my name abroad;
Thine is the power, the praise is thine,
My Saviour and my God!

IV.

Thus when the saints in glory meet,
Their lips proclaim thy grace;
They cast their honours at thy feet,
And own their borrow'd rays.

SERMON XXXI.

HOLY FORTITUDE, OR REMEDIES AGAINST FEAR.

1 COR. xvi. 13.

STAND FAST IN THE FAITH, QUIT YOU LIKE MEN, BE STRONG.

IN the first ages of christianity, the professors of the gospel had great need of divine courage, that they might stand the many shocks of opposition, reproach, and violence. The Corinthian heathens, though they were a polite and learned people, yet they were blind and obstinate in their own superstitions and idolatry, and rooted in the profane and vicious customs of their ancestors. It required a large stock of holy fortitude, to profess and practise a new religion among them, that ran counter to all their former opinions, and their manners. Therefore St. Paul, who planted the gospel in that city, calls upon his converts to shake off cowardice and fear, to stand firm and unmoved in the profession of their faith, to behave like men of war, like heroes, in the practice of christianity, and to exert all their strength of soul in this glorious work. *Stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.*

It is true, we live not in a heathen country, among lewd and barbarous superstitions: The land where our lot is cast, is honoured with the christian name, and professes the religion of Jesus; yet let me tell you, infidelity is a growing temptation of this age, the gospel of Christ hath plentiful ridicule thrown upon it, by many of our neighbours that go under the name of christians, and we may sometimes be called to put on courage for the defence of this gospel.

But besides this, there are many things occurring in the divine life, that require us to put on this holy fortitude of soul. The very nature of men is so corrupt and vicious, their hearts are so averse to the holy precepts of christianity, the multitude of sinners is so exceeding great in every nation, even where the gospel is professed, the customs of this world are so contrary to the rules of the gospel, and the malice and rage of Satan with his evil angels, are so constant and so violent against the religion and the name of Christ, that it is true at all times, as well as in the primitive age, *that all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution;* 2 Tim. iii. 12. When we become soldiers of Christ, and resolve to be religious in good earnest, we must reckon upon enemies and oppositions, we must be prepared to endure hardness; *chapter* ii. *verse* 3.

Our business therefore is, to seek for a spirit of power and holy fortitude, that we may be void of fear in the profession of our faith, and in the practice of our daily duties. Not the Corinthians only, but we also, *must watch, and stand fast in the faith, we must quit ourselves like men, and be strong.* If we are frighted at the sound of every reproach, or terrified by the fierce opposition of a wicked world, we shall be in danger of turning back from the paths of christianity, and of losing the heavenly prize. Such doctrines, and such practices as the gospel teaches, require the professors of them to be bold and valiant.

And besides the difficulties we shall meet with from a degenerate and sinful world, there are many other trials that attend the christian life. Sorrows and sufferings belong to human nature, in this fallen and unhappy state: *Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward;* Job. v. 7. This earth is designed for a stage of conflict, a scene of probation, where each of us must act our parts, under the eye and notice of God our supreme Governor, and our final Rewarder. He expects that we should put on a sacred hardiness of soul; he requires that we should not indulge a spirit of fear, but be armed with power and courage, that we may endure to the end. And blessed be his name that he hath given us promises to raise our hope, that as he endued his people in ancient times with his grace, so he will bestow this spirit of holy fortitude upon us also, and that as our day is, so our strength shall be.

To cast my discourse into some method, I shall,

First, Briefly describe this divine temper of mind. In the next place,

Secondly, I would represent the various occasions which we shall find for the exercise of it.

Thirdly, I shall mention a few motives to incite us to acquire this holy fortitude, and to maintain it throughout our whole course of life. And,

Fourthly, Propose some remedies against a spirit of slavish fear, which is directly opposite to this christian virtue.

The first thing proposed is, to describe what I mean by fortitude and courage; and to this end, we must distinguish it into that of the active and that of the passive kind. Active valour or courage, is such a temper of soul, as to attempt and venture upon any bold act of duty, which may endanger our present ease, and worldly interest; and prompts us to pursue it with a becoming steadiness and bravery of mind, undaunted at every opposition we meet with, and unterrified at all the threatening dangers that stand in our way: Passive valour is such an habitual firmness and constancy of soul, as enables us to bear what sufferings we fall under, without repinings and inward vexations, and without any outward tokens of sinking or despondency. When we sustain heavy sorrows, or anguish of the flesh, without any wild and unreasonable groanings of nature, without rage and unbecoming resentment, without tumult and confusion of spirit. And this should be the temper of our souls, and our christian conduct, whether the sufferings which we feel, arise from the immediate hand of God, or from the injustice and violence of men.

In the second place, I come to represent the various occasions that we shall find in the christian life, for the exercise of this holy courage, and that under both kinds of it; *viz.* the active and the passive, or that which consists in doing, and that which consists in suffering; and I shall enlarge upon each of them in a practical way. Active valour is necessary for a professor of the christian faith: And when and where soever divine providence gives us any just occasions for the exercise of this sort of fortitude, let no christian refuse them, or shamefully withdraw from his duty. The occasions we have for it are such as these:

I. When we are called to profess and practise strict piety, even under the special view and notice of profane sinners. Perhaps our dwelling may be cast among profligate wretches, who live without God in the world; but we must not be afraid to own, that we fear the great God, and that we worship that awful name, which their blasphemies affront and vilify. Nor must we be ashamed to let the world know, that we cannot pass a day

without calling upon our God, and that prayer is as necessary to us, as our daily food. It is strange and monstrous that it should ever be accounted a matter of shame among creatures to acknowledge the God that made them, or that it should ever need any courage to profess homage and adoration to our Creator! What degenerate times do we live in, that it should require some fortitude to tell the world, that we who are creatures confess a God! And yet sometimes even this very fortitude is wanting, and we are contented to look like atheists, lest we should be thought religious. Base cowardice! and degenerate times indeed!

II. When we happen into the company of infidels and apostates from christianity, who throw their impious jests on the gospel of Christ, we may find a plain call of providence to stand up for his name and honour.

It is true, there are few of us who are sent to travel beyond the seas, and to engage in necessary converse about religion with heathens; but I hinted before, that infidelity is a growing mischief of the present age, even in our own land. It seems to be a spreading infection, and how far the great God may suffer it to prevail, he only knows. There are multitudes already that have made shipwreck of the faith of Christ, and betake themselves only to the dim and glimmering light of nature, as a sufficient refuge for their souls, and their only guide in matters of religion: A poor doubtful guide, and a dangerous refuge! And yet these men are continually instructing one another to wage war against the blessed gospel, and rise in arms of defiance against the only Saviour. It is proper then for us to enquire, are we ready to declare ourselves christians if we are called to it, when deists and scoffers surround us with their abominable jests, or their wanton cavils? For though sometimes they argue against our creed with calmness and decency, yet it must be confessed that those are the most common weapons which this sort of men make use of. Dare we now make a profession of our faith among men of infidelity, and not value their banter, and their insolent reproaches? Let us remember that christian courage must encounter mockery and slanders as well as other terrors: Courage must guard us against sinful shame, as well as against sinful fear. Can we glory in a crucified Saviour as the wisdom and the power of God, if we should be placed between the Jews on one side, and the heathens on the other, who load this doctrine with folly and scandal. St. Paul was a brave example; O that every soul of us could as bravely imitate him! But let us proceed to some more occasions of courage a-kin to this.

Perhaps we content ourselves to be christians in our closets, and to frequent the public assemblies of worship without shame or fear, because our neighbours do the same: But I would enquire of such general professors of christianity, Why are you so backward to give up your names to Christ, and attend on the special ordinance of his holy supper? Is it not because you are ashamed to appear in such a strict profession of godliness, and to be known and observed by the world, as those that have devoted themselves to the Lord in his church? This is certainly the case of some younger converts. Let them here be put in mind of their former neglects, and their present duty. Be strong in the Lord, banish a shameful shame, and seal your covenant in the blood of Christ. His cross is your hope, and why should you not make it your glory too.

If you are ashamed of such a public profession in peaceful times, what will ye do if days of trial should come? Would you be ready to vindicate your separation from the church of Rome, and all its superstitions? Would you have courage enough to maintain the purity of your profession, and your close adherence to scripture, in opposition to all

the inventions and traditions of men? Would your heart be strong to persist in your peculiar practices of religion, in the most scriptural forms of it, in an hour of persecution and danger? Blessed be God for a protestant king on the throne, and a glorious race of protestant princes to succeed him. May the blessings of heaven from above descend on them all, and render them in their successions an everlasting blessing to Great Britain and all the protestant churches! But a christian indeed should be so formed, and so furnished, as to be ready to profess and practise his religion in every nation, and in every age, in the midst of storms as well as under the shining sun.

III. When we are called to practise an unfashionable virtue, or to refuse compliance with any fashionable vice. This is another occasion that demands the exercise of christian fortitude. Let us survey a few instances of this kind.

It is an unfashionable thing now-a-days to introduce a word of practical godliness into company: The polite world will tell us, it spoils conversation: Mark what a silence is spread over the room, when any person dares to begin so disagreeable a subject; there is none to second him, he may preach alone, and it is well if he escapes a profane scoff. This is a very true, but a very shameful account of things, according to the present mode. Any thing but religion is thought fit to entertain a friend. Even where persons of piety meet together in their visits, this sort of language is banished from company and the parlour, and it is confined only to God and the closet. Alas! we are ashamed to appear truly religious; but if we had holy courage enough, one person would not be afraid to begin, nor another to carry on, such divine discourse. There are surely some happy moments wherein an useful word may be introduced with prudence and decency, to warm each others hearts, and to rekindle the holy fire of love and devotion that is almost expiring.

Again, perhaps we may be much engaged in the world among persons that make no conscience of speaking truth: But if we would be christians indeed, we must have courage enough always to shew a hatred of falsehood, and keep up a tenderness of spirit, lest we be drawn to the borders of a lie; nor must we be ashamed to let the world know that we are the devoted servants of truth. When some knavish or unjust practice has overspread a city or a country, and become almost universal, we must dare to be honest in a cheating world; we must maintain our righteousness, and let it shine in the midst of a deceitful age, though perhaps we may be called scrupulous fools. If we happen to be engaged in necessary business with persons who drink to excess, we must boldly deny the imposed glass, we must secure our own sobriety, even in the midst of drunkards, and as much as possible avoid their society: Nor should any scandalous names of puritan and precisian affright us from the paths of strict holiness. When we meet with gross affronts in the world, we may be made the scorn and jest of all the company, if we decline the modish customs of satisfaction and bloody revenge; we may be charged with cowardice among the ruffians of the age; but a man of honour must have courage to bear this charge, unless he will venture to run upon the sword of God which is drawn and pointed againt revenge, duelling, and murder.

When the fashion of dress or visits, of salutations or entertainments, exceeds the bounds of modesty or temperance, or intrenches upon truth or religion, we must bravely dare to be unfashionable, and *have no fellowship with any unfruitful works of darkness;* Eph. v. 11. We must obey the great and holy God, rather than comply with the sinful customs of men.

" 'Tis brave to meet the world, stand fast among
" Whole crowds, and not be carry'd with the throng."

I grant that religion doth not consist in singularity, but there are some seasons when we must be singular, if we would be holy, and exert a sacred fortitude of soul, to secure ourselves from the defilements of the world. *Come out from among them, is the language of God in such cases, touch not the unclean thing, and be ye separate, saith the Lord;* 2 Cor. vi. 17.

IV. Another instance of necessary courage, is, when we are called to undertake the cause of the oppressed, to plead for the poor against the mighty, or to vindicate the innocent against the men of slander or violence. It is a cowardly spirit, a spirit of shameful pride, or selfish meanness, to trample upon those that are lying upon the ground, to tread upon the poor and the distressed, and sometimes through fear of the mighty, as well as scorn of the poor, to neglect the cries of those that are injured. This indeed is the custom of the world; but if we be the disciples of Christ, we must have more courage than this, we must *open our mouths for the dumb*, and plead the cause of those that cannot speak for themselves; *Prov.* xxxi. 8.

When we happen into company that delight in scandal, and the slander goes round from tongue to tongue, we must first guard our lips from the infamous compliance, though we cannot defend our ears: And then we should have some compassion on the absent person, who perhaps may be loaded with calumny and lies: Nor should we be afraid or ashamed to put in a relieving word; to support the good name of those that are oppressed by malicious reproaches. And if the censure be never so just, yet where providence doth not plainly call us to join in that censure, let us not betray such an inclination to evil-speaking, nor shew such a base and mean soul, as to call names for company.

Where the life or the estate of our neighbour is in danger, we must venture something to secure it, as well as to defend his good name. This advice is given in Prov. xxiv. 11, 12. *If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn out to death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, behold, we knew it not, doth not he that pondereth the heart consider?* That is, if there are any persons drawn out to death, and ready to be slain by sinful oppression, and that thou hast a just and reasonable power in thine hand to preserve them, it is not thy duty to stand still or hide thyself, and say, *behold I knew it not.* He that lets the ox or the ass of his neighbour go astray, or sink under a burden, and passeth away regardless as though he did not know it, is under the censure of the word of God; and much more do we deserve the censure, if we abandon our fellow-creatures of human nature to perish, when we are able to save them. The all-wise and almighty God considers it, and he will not approve of such meanness of spirit, and such a shameful defect of christian charity.

V. It is a work which calls for courage to admonish our brethren when they depart from the ways of righteousness, and to reprove sin among those with whom we converse. The law of God requires it; Lev. xix. 17. *Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.* It is expressed as though a neglect of reproof, where it is a duty, looks like a sort of hatred, or want of love. But for the most part it is want of courage forbids it. Let it be done with holy boldness; but without wrath and resentment, or selfish revenge; let it be expressed

and managed with all love and gentleness, with all humility and compassion, and with a becoming exercise of those lovely characters of moderation and meekness, which I have elsewhere described.

Nathan the prophet ingeniously reproved David the king for his adultery and murder. And we should learn the most artful and obliging methods, and the softest language of reproof, that we may practise it with more courage, security, and success; and the more secret it is, it will generally be most successful. If at any time we are called by most evident providence, to give an open rebuke in the face of the world, together with courage, we must put on all wisdom and humility, lest we publish our own conceit and pride, and provoke wrath without hope of success. When we rebuke the profane and impious wretch, for the most glaring iniquity, we should use our best prudence in distinguishing proper seasons, *lest we cast a pearl before swine, and it become useless, and be trodden under foot;* Matt. vii. 6.

Sometimes it is hard to know what is our duty in this respect, but thus far in general it may be said, This should be done whensoever there is a great and evident probability of doing service to God and souls by it: Whensoever a vindication of the name of God and his honour requires it, or when there is any just hope of doing good to men; there is indeed a time to keep silence in this case, and there is a time to speak. O may the word, and Spirit, and providence of God join together to give us direction in this difficult duty, and courage to perform it!

VI. Reformation of all kinds, whether in families or churches, in cities, or nations, demands a good degree of resolution and courage. It is a brave and daring enterprize, to stem the torrent of the age we live in, and to attempt to change the vicious customs of a city or nation. We must have a soul inspired with zeal for piety and goodness, if we would contest the point with the guilty, and cover them with deserved shame, or bring them to deserved punishment. Blessed be God, there are societies formed in our age for this glorious purpose! May everlasting success attend their zeal, and may their heads be covered with divine protection in every hour of danger!

We have need of courage to stand up for truth and purity in the church of Christ, when it is over-run with corrupt doctrines, wicked heresies, superstitions, and false worship. We must use our endeavour to root out these evil weeds by all the sacred influences of reason and scripture; not by rage and violence, not by fraud and falsehood, not by slander and scandalous language, not by calling in the power of the magistrate and the sword of the state to assist us; Christ hath not allowed his followers such weapons as these against superstition and heresy: *The sword of the Spirit is the word of God;* Eph. vi. 17. *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal;* 2 Cor. x. 4.

And when we have endeavoured to reform the offenders by all christian methods, and find no success, we must dare to separate ourselves from the many and the mighty, who will not be reformed. This was the glorious practice of our fathers, the protestants and the puritans, in the several seasons of their reformation, when they were called to oppose the greater or the lesser corruptions of the christian church.

If our kindred or families are fallen into any foolish, vain, or sinful practices, or any civil society to which we belong hath departed from the rules of justice or truth, it belongs to a christian to become a public good, by using his influence, as far as it goes, toward the rectifying of every disorder. He should put on a divine fortitude, whensoever providence calls him to attempt a reformation amongst them. There is need of a noble

spirit and a pious bravery, to rise up against any foolish or vicious customs, to combat any rooted principles or habits of error or iniquity, and to oppose any number of persons that are engaged in an evil course. Moses forbids us *to follow a multitude to do evil;* Exod. xxiii. 2. And there are seasons when we may be called to oppose a multitude of evil-doers: And though no man stand by us, yet we are bound to stand by the cause of God and goodness. So divine a cause deserves and demands such divine courage.

How glorious was the character of Caleb and Joshua, who spoke well of the land of promise, and encouraged the armies of Israel, while all the rest of the spies which were sent *brought an evil report upon the good land;* Num. xiii. 31, 32. The people believed the evil report, and spoke of stoning Joshua and Caleb: But the *glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle,* and God himself gave a testimony from heaven to the sacred courage and honour of these Jewish heroes. What a brave spirit dwelt in Elijah, who attempted to reform Israel from idolatry! He would not fall down and worship Baal, though he thought he had been left alone, the only worshipper of the true God in the nation; 1 *Kings* xix. 14.

VII. There are some other, and very common occasions for the exercise of sacred courage, which attend persons, especially in the lower ranks of life: As for instance; when a servant is called by providence to speak the truth, and yet he dare not do it without offending his master: When a poor man is required to bear witness in some important concern, and his rich neighbour frowns and looks sour upon him: When a person of an inferior character is tempted to join with the mighty in some unjust and dishonourable practice, and while his superiors invite him to it, his conscience forbids his compliance. It is a noble act of christian courage, in such instances as these, to follow truth, equity, and conscience, wheresoever they lead, in opposition to all the allurements, the frowns, and the threatenings of persons in an higher station. Let those who fall under such a temptation remember, *there is an higher than the highest,* and the great God, the Lord of heaven and earth, is the patron of truth and righteousness, the guardian of innocence, and the dreadful avenger of deceit and lying.

I might add other instances of a kindred nature in common life, wherein christian fortitude is greatly necessary, especially in this corrupt and degenerate age: As when a trader must look poverty in the face, and meet approaching ruin in his outward circumstances, unlesshe make some inroad upon his honesty, and practise falsehood and deceit. But if the case be thus, if a christian sees himself sinking in the world, by the frowns of providence, he must dare to sink rather than cheat his neighbour, and save himself by any base and dishonest methods. A man of religion and honour must stand firm to his word, must follow strict equity in all things, and neither enter into any methods of fraud, nor of violence, to retrieve his decaying circumstances.

O how many little knavish contrivances do persons often practise to secure a good bargain to themselves, and sometimes they support their dying credit in the world at the expence and loss of their innocent neighbour! They borrow what they know they are not able to pay: They draw up false accounts of their own estate: They impose upon the credulous with words of a double meaning, or with downright lies: They almost forget they are christians, for fear lest they should be undone, and practise the things at which an heathen would have blushed and started, because they have not courage enough to be honest and poor.

VIII. Christians have need of holy fortitude, to venture their lives at the demand of providence, and expose themselves to violence, and to a bloody death. Sometimes they are called to this glorious service in the cause of God and his church: So were many of the prophets, the apostles, and primitive christians, as well as the martyrs of later ages. Sometimes in the cause of our country, divine providence calls us to expose our blood, and to assist or guard the nation against invasions from abroad, or tumults at home, and to quell the rage of a brutal multitude. In a just and necessary war for our country, or in defence of our natural or religious rights, we may fight with christian courage, when we have well surveyed the justice of our cause, and find it approved of God. And there are seasons when we may be called to venture our lives for our christian brethren; 1 *John* iii. 15.

But perhaps some of these things may come as naturally also under the head of passive valour and courage: And indeed the most active valour of the greatest heroes is built upon that which is passive. It is on this account they dare venture to expose their flesh to wounds, their names to reproach, or their bodies to death, because they can bear the wounds, the reproaches, or death itself with a noble serenity and fortitude of soul. All the active boldness in the world is but rashness and folly where such a hardiness and patience are utterly wanting. Of this passive valour I shall mention but two particular cases wherein christians must exert themselves.

I. When we are called to bear sickness, pain, shame, losses, disappointments, all the sorrowful changes of life, or death itself from the mere hand of God. This is to be done with a steadiness of spirit, with a firmness of soul, with christian fortitude, with a sacred and serene calm upon all our powers and passions, without fretting or vexing, or inward disquietude. It is a sign of a weak mind to be overset with every blast of wind. *If thou faintest in the day of adversity, thy strength is but small;* Prov. xxiv. 10. We must not indeed *despise the chastening of the Almighty, nor must we faint when we are rebuked of him;* Heb. xii. 5.

Let the men of this world that know not Christ, that are not acquainted with the gospel, and have not felt the powers of the world to come, let them fret and grow peevish at every disappointment that falls upon them in their earthly comforts, or when their flesh is visited with sore pains: But it does not become a christian to be sour and fretful under the afflicting hand of God, for it is the hand of his heavenly Father. To be overwhelmed and almost distracted with the crosses we meet with in the world, is not becoming the character of a child of God, one that is high born, that has his birth from heaven, and his family there; it is a shame for him to grow wild with impatience, or to run into desperate courses for relief. This is not courage, but mere cowardice of soul to put an end to our own life in order to escape from our sorrows. The wisest among the heathens reproved it as a meanness of spirit; and surely it is much more unbecoming the religion of Christ, and that divine fortitude that every christian should be endued with. We are not to be affrighted, though the mountains should be turned upside down, and cast into the midst of the sea: The Lord of hosts is our shield and defence, he is a rock above all the waves, and if our feet are fixed upon this rock, what need have we for terror? The name of the God of Jacob, in the xlvi. Psalm, is a match for all our foes, and a sovereign remedy for all our fears.

Christian courage appears also upon a bed of sickness, when at the call of God, we look death in the face with a cheerful soul. When all our friends stand around us,

and every one, by the lamentable air that sits in their faces, gives us notice of our approaching dissolution, then to look upon death with a serene countenance, and not be affrighted, but venture boldly into the invisible world; this is a glorious fortitude derived from the grace of faith.

II. Another instance of passive valour is, when we bear persecutions of all sorts from the hand of men with a holy courage, for the sake of God. When we can be plundered of our possessions in this world, and stripped of all our comforts, and yet be easy. *Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods*, says the apostle to the Hebrews; *chapter* x. *verses* 32, 34. *and ye endured a great fight of afflictions with cheerfulness, knowing that in heaven ye have a better and more enduring substance.* In Heb. xi. *verse* 36. when the apostle speaks of the ancient Jewish saints, *they had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, of bonds and imprisonments, they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented:* but they were men above this world, *of whom the world was not worthy:* They had a spirit of divine courage that made them too great for this world, although they were almost banished out of it, and wandered among the beasts of the earth. Let not christians then be guilty of base and mean compliances, to preserve their substance in the world, nor to cover their names from slanders and infamy, nor to secure their liberties or their lives when Christ calls us to part with them. If there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things. If there be any call to the practice of such courage, for the sake of Christ, remember these exhortations, and be not afraid.

Thus I have given you variety of instances both of active and passive valour, as they are to be exercised in the christian life: I fear they are too many for the best and boldest of us to practise, even under all our advantages. But in order to render them a little more easy to christians, the following motives and directions may give some assistance under the influence of the blessed Spirit. And these shall be the subject of the next discourse.

Recollection. And now, O my soul, it is time to turn thy thoughts inward, and enquire how much of this discourse is suited to thy own case? Thou acknowledgest there is a God, but art thou not sometimes ashamed to call upon him in the morning for his presence all the day, lest thy companions should know thou hast been upon thy knees? Hast thou courage to ask a blessing on thy food in the place where others deride the practice?

Thou hast learned and thou hast believed the religion of Christ, but hast thou ever yet had courage enough to make a solemn and public profession of it? Hast thou ever yet publicly given thy name up to Christ as one of his subjects, and joined thyself to his visible kingdom amongst men? Or art thou only a believer in secret, ashamed to make profession of thy faith, by joining thyself to some christian assembly? If this be thy state, thou hast now a loud call to add fortitude to thy faith, and assume christian courage to profess the sacred name in which thou hast believed.

Or art thou a professor of this holy religion? Thou hast listed thyself under the banner of Christ, in these days of liberty and peace, and while thou dwellest among those who encourage thy faith and profession. But enquire into thyself, hast thou such a love to the gospel, as to glory in it even amongst infidels, who make it the object of their mockery and reproach? Has this divine religion so deep a root in thy heart, as to bear

and resist the storms of the world, and to stand firm and flourish still? Hast thou courage to declare thyself a disciple of the cross, and a professor of a crucified Saviour, when thou shalt happen to be in the company of those who blaspheme him?

Hast thou obtained holy boldness enough to practise virtue when it is out of fashion, and canst thou refuse to comply with the warmest temptations to a fashionable sin? Hast thou got such a victory over thyself as to dare to be singular, if thy company would lead thee into any modish vice? This is an hard lesson to young and tender minds, but it must be learned, O my soul, if thou wilt be a christian indeed. Hast thou courage to vindicate the innocent, when he is assaulted with slanders, and to frown upon those who delight in scandal? Or art thou so meanly spirited, as to join in a common jest, that is thrown upon the absent, and to mix with the odious tribe of back-biters? Remember this is a shameful baseness of spirit; but a christian must be a man of honour.

Canst thou see thy friends, thy companions, indulge a sinful course, and hast thou not one kind admonition for them? Hast thou not virtue and courage enough to warn thy brother, and to turn his foot from the path of iniquity, that leads to ruin and death? But remember also, that gentleness and love must attend thy rebukes, if thou ever desirest they should attain success. A reprover should have a bold, but a tender spirit. What zeal hast thou, O my soul, for reformation? Or canst thou bear with immoralities and corruptions of every kind? And rather than venture to displease man, wilt thou let thy neighbours go on for ever to displease God? What wouldest thou do, if thou wert called to face the great, and to profess religion before the mighty men of the earth? Is thy faith grown bold enough to shew itself in a court, in a palace, and to venture all thy earthly interests for the defence of it?

Thus far concerning thy active fortitude. But how stands the case with regard to passive valour, and enduring of sufferings? Is thy heart firm under sharp trials of providence? Canst thou resign thy health and thy ease into the hand of God without fretting or repining? Or doth thy courage faint, and thy impatience shamefully discover itself under the common pains and diseases of nature? I grant, there is much of weakness derived even to a manly spirit, from the distempers of the flesh: When the nerves are unbraced, and the tabernacle of the body tottering, the soul partakes of the infirmities of this poor fleshly engine. O frail unhappy state of human nature, and souls that dwell in clay! But is it thy constant labour and prayer, that patience may have its perfect work, that thy spirit may be ever sedate under all the pains and disquietudes of this mortal flesh, and thy temper kept serene under all the frowns and clouds of heaven?

Art thou ready to face the king of terrors, and to descend into that dark valley? Thou must meet this adversary shortly, O my soul! Labour therefore daily to get courage and victory over death, by faith in a dying and a rising Saviour. Happy is that faith that has no carnal fear attending it, but is got above the frowns and smiles of this world. My soul longs after it, and reaches at it, as something within the power of her present attainment through the grace of Christ. I long to be armed with this sacred courage, and to have my heart fortified all round with these divine munitions. I would fain be calm and serene in the midst of buffettings and reproaches, and pursue my course steadily toward heaven, under the banner of faith, through all the arrows of slander and malice. Lord Jesus, I wait for thy divine influence, to bestow this grace, and thy divine teachings, to put me in the way to obtain it.

HYMN FOR SERMON XXXI.

HOLY FORTITUDE, OR REMEDIES AGAINST FEAR.

I.

AM I a soldier of the cross,
A follower of the lamb?
And shall I fear to own his cause,
Or blush to speak his name?

II.

Must I be carry'd to the skies,
On flow'ry beds of ease;
While others fought to win the prize,
And sail'd through bloody seas?

III.

Are there no foes for me to face?
Must I not stem the flood?
Is this vile world a friend to grace,
To help me on to God?

IV.

Sure I must fight if I would reign;
Increase my courage, Lord!
I'll bear the toil, endure the pain,
Supported by thy word.

V.

Thy saints in all this glorious war,
Shall conquer though they die;
They see the triumph from afar,
And seize it with their eye.

VI.

When that illustrious day shall rise,
And all thine armies shine
In robes of victory through the skies,
The glory shall be thine.

SERMON XXXII.

HOLY FORTITUDE, OR REMEDIES AGAINST FEAR.

1 COR. xvi. 13.

STAND FAST IN THE FAITH, QUIT YOU LIKE MEN, BE STRONG.

HAVING described this holy temper of spirit, this fortitude both of the active and passive kind, and having set before you various occasions for its exercise in the christian life, I proceed now to the third thing which I proposed, and that is, to excite you by some engaging motives, to seek after this temper, which is so necessary for a christian. I shall not enforce this from the light of nature, and from the mere laws of reason, which have been joined with ambitious and selfish principles in some of the pagan heroes, and have influenced many a man, in the days of heathenism, to some great exploits of fortitude and fame. There is nothing in all the principles of natural religion, that makes the mind brave and noble, but it receives high advancements and glorious efficacy from christianity. I would call you,

First, To cast your eyes on the noble patterns of courage that you find in the New Testament. I do not invite you to meditate the examples of heathen warriors, but consider the example of christian heroes, your predecessors, who have stood fast in the faith, who have quitted themselves like men, in numerous and shining instances of active and passive courage. Look at the blessed apostles, Peter and John, when they rejoiced to suffer shame for the sake of Christ their Lord, and boldly told the council of priests, that they must preach the name of Jesus, in opposition to their menaces; they must obey God rather than men. Look at St. Paul the most eminent christian hero: Behold him in the midst of the Roman soldiers, and a violent multitude of unbelieving Jews. Hear how he acknowledges his exalted Saviour before captains and centurions, before king Agrippa, before Felix and Festus, who were two successive governors of Judea! And with the same fortitude of soul he appeared before Cæsar, at Rome. *I am not ashamed*, says he, *of the gospel of Christ;* Rom. i. 16. for he whom I have trusted in, is almighty to support me. Read that most generous and pathetic speech of his, *Acts* xxi. 13. when the spirit of prophecy had foretold that Paul should be *bound at Jerusalem, and delivered captive into the hands of the gentiles;* his friends and strangers besought him not to go up to that city. Then Paul answered, *What mean ye to weep, and to break mine heart? For I am ready, not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.* I know, says he, and *the Holy Ghost is witness, that bonds and afflictions wait for me, but none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to myself, that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God;* Acts xx. 24.

Now when a special occasion calls us to the exercise of this virtue, and to confess Christ before the world, for us to be mealy-mouthed, and baffled, and frighted at the

countenances of men, this is to forsake the example of the blessed apostles, and obey men rather than God. The prophets and the apostles, the ancient saints and the primitive martyrs have given us noble patterns of this virtue; and why should our spirits fail us, or our lips tremble, if we are called to the same glorious confession? Is not our religion divine? Is not the gospel still worthy of the same honour? Is not our God the same Almighty? Is not our Redeemer the same Jesus? And does not a dying, a rising, and a reigning Saviour deserve the same homage of our tongues, and demand the same glory at our hands? Yes surely, he demands it of us, and he deserves it infinitely: And not only his apostles, but his own example teacheth us to practise this fortitude, both of the active and the passive kind.

In the *second place* then, behold this perfect pattern of fortitude, Jesus the Son of God: When he came into the world in the midst of poverty, and made but a mean figure, as the son of a carpenter, he was called to oppose the whole nation of the Jews, and the priests and princes of Jerusalem; he was sent to reform the vicious customs of a wicked and degenerate age. How did he stand and face danger without fear! When he went into the temple, with what a sacred zeal did he scourge the buyers and sellers out of his Father's house of prayer! Ye know what a noble testimony he bare to the truth, when he was called before the great men, the rulers of the church and state. You know again, what instances of passive courage our Lord Jesus manifested, when he was hatefully reproached, and suffered shameful indignities from a rude multitude: When he was persecuted, when he was buffetted, when he wrestled with many and mighty sorrows, when his friends left him alone in the hands of his cruel enemies.

It must be confessed, his spirit trembled within him, and he was sore amazed, when it pleased his Father *to bruise him, and put him to grief, and to make his soul an offering for sin;* Isaiah liii. 10. These were unknown and inexpressible burdens, that made him groan indeed, and offer strong cries and tears to heaven, that the cup of terror might pass from him. If ever his courage seemed to fail him, it was in that agony in the garden, when he endured more than any mere man could bear. A formidable and a dismal hour, when the Father hid his face from him, and the powers of darkness fell upon him with angelic might and fury! But these are sorrows of atonement, which the saints are never called to suffer. And yet, by secret divine supports, Jesus endured all these agonies, and upon the cross he triumphed, not only over the malice of men, but *over principalities and powers of hell, and made an open shew of them;* Col. ii. 15. perhaps, before armies of the invisible world, and millions of applauding angels.

Read the sacred advice, *Heb.* xii. 1, 2, 3. Not only look ye, says the apostle, to the great cloud of witnesses that are gone before, but above all look to Jesus, the "Author and Finisher of your faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself," that opposed a multitude, a legion, a world of sinners, lest ye be weary and faint in your minds, nor let your spirits sink while you behold his divine fortitude: Let such an illustrious scene animate your souls, and inspire the fainting believer with new courage. Consider,

Thirdly, What you are; if you are christians, ye are soldiers of Christ, ye have already entered the lists with all the powers of hell, and are ye afraid of *man that is a worm, and the son of man that is a worm?* Job. xxv. 6. Ye have ranged yourselves under the ban-

ner of the Redeemer, and the Redeemer's army must fight against all the armies of darkness and their allies. Ye have set up to oppose sin and Satan, two powerful enemies; and are ye afraid to be brow-beaten by a fellow-worm, one who is weak and mortal like yourselves? Consider,

Fourthly, If ye are christians, what promises of the divine presence and help you have in the Bible; and when the mighty God has given such divine encouragement, he chides his people into courage; Isaiah li. 12, 13. *I, even I am he that comforteth you: Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass? And forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth? And hast feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? And where is the fury of the oppressor?* A generous and divine cordial to keep the soul from fainting! The presence of God is an effectual support. St. Paul found it so; *for when all men forsook him, the Lord stood by and strengthened him;* 1 Tim. iv. 16, 17. Alas! we are poor, feeble, trembling soldiers, our hands hang down, and our faces gather paleness: But we dare to confront the terrors of this world, if we taste and feel such divine encouragements. We know that a weak christian can do wonders with an almighty Saviour, and an all-sufficient promise. When St. Paul had this word given him, *My grace is sufficient for thee*, he could *glory even in infirmities*, that the *power of Christ might rest upon him;* 2 Cor. xii. 9. The little feeble man, of a *contemptible presence*, could do *all things through Christ strengthening him;* Phil. iv. 13. And every believer has the same Almighty Helper, the same gospel, and the same promises.

In the last place, consider the large and never-fading crown of glory that awaits the conqueror at the end of the christian conflict. *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life;* Rev. ii. 10. Consider the honour and trimmph, those riches of glory, and that everlasting inheritance, that shall be your reward in the future world, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: *He that overcometh shall sit down with me on my throne*, &c. Rev. iii. 21. *He that overcometh shall inherit all things;* chap. xxi. 7. Put all these together in the balances, with a few crosses and disappointments, a little trouble and uneasiness; nay, though you should add torture and death in the same scale, you may easily judge which will outweigh. Gaze at your crown of life, and your immortal hopes, till you feel your souls divinely animated to the combat: Learn from the apostle, and assume that glorious language; *Our light afflictions, which are but for a moment*, are scarce to be mentioned or named *with the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory that shall be revealed;* 2 Cor. iv. 17. *Therefore we both labour and suffer reproach;* therefore we bear all present sorrows with holy courage, because we look not at the things that are seen, little things that are temporal; but look at the great unseen things that are eternal; 2 *Cor.* iv. 18.

The fourth and last general head of discourse shall now furnish us with some sacred remedies against this slavish fear. The passion of fear in general is wisely wrought by the great God into human nature; it is a disturbance both of our animal composition, and of the mind, upon the apprehension of some approaching evil, or upon the apparent danger of it. This is an excellent provision which the God of nature has made, to guard us from many mischiefs. It is innocent and useful when it is fixed on a proper object, and exercised in a proper degree. It becomes a part of our religion when God is the

object of our fear, whereby we maintain such a holy awe of his Majesty, as awakens a constant desire to please him, joined with a temper of holy love.

But when we suffer creatures to raise and influence our fears upon every occasion, so as to ruffle and disquiet our spirits, to throw the soul from off its rest, and to turn us aside from the steady course of duty, then it becomes a sinful and forbidden passion, and we should make it our business to watch against it, and suppress it. There are some persons so feeble in their native constitutions, or their spirits are so weakened by the distempers of the flesh, that fear is a constant tyrant over them: Their case is to be pitied indeed, but they ought to stir up themselves as far as possible to shake off this bondage, lest it withhold them from the practice of necessary duties, and rob them of all the comforts of religion. This slavish fear is a disease of the mind, as well as a weakness of nature: and besides our summoning together all the powers and precepts of reason, we should also apply the remedies of religion, in order to remove it: If the divine Spirit concur with his blessing, the following methods may be made happily successful:

I. See to it that ye are christians indeed, that you have the power of religion wrought in your hearts, otherwise you will never be able boldly to maintain the form and the profession of it in an hour of danger. Fear will prevail over every thing but true faith: And if your religion be not inward and sincere, and built on solid foundations, it will tremble and totter, and be in great danger of being utterly lost. One hard name, one biting reproach, one witty scoff or ugly slander, will dash the hypocrite out of countenance, and he dares not stand up for his God and Saviour.

And remember also, that your faith must be always kept awake and lively. See to it that your hope be not only well established, but you must preserve your evidences for heaven ever clear, that ye may look upon yourselves as the care and charge of Christ, and under the special eye and protection of God your Saviour. This was the divine foundation on which the great apostle raised his courage in the gospel to so high a degree. "I am neither afraid to suffer these things," says he, "that is, bonds and imprisonments; nor am I ashamed of this gospel, for I know whom I have believed, I know him as my Saviour, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against the day of his appearance;" 2 *Tim.* i. 12.

If you would raise your spirits to a sublime pitch of holy fortitude, brighten your faith and hope daily, by a frequent examination of the frame of your hearts, by watchful walking before God, by committing your souls afresh into the hands of Jesus and his Spirit, for pardoning and renewing grace, that you may believe on just and solid grounds that you are the children of God, and that Jesus is your salvation. A lively faith gives divine courage. Faith is a noble shield to ward off fear, and our helmet is the hope of salvation.

Take heed of defiling your souls with sensuality; Take heed of any false biasses on your spirit, and wrong designs in your actions, lest you bring fresh guilt upon your consciences. Guilt will create fear, and fill the soul with a perplexing tumult of thoughts. But when the terrors of this world assault you on every side, reproaches and threatenings, the frowns of your friends, and the rage of your enemies, you may be all serene and peaceful within, while you maintain a sacred consciousness of soul, that you have been seeking the light of truth, and pursuing the path of duty. When I can say, God is my

witness that I am sincerely labouring in his service; when I can look up to heaven, though my friends scorn me, and say, My record is on high; I may imitate the faith and courage of Job in his best hours, and leave all my interests in the hand of my God. Let our faith be active then, and our conscience clear, that we may read our title to all the promises, and apply them to our own case with courage and assurance. *The God of hope will fill us with all joy and peace in believing;* Rom. xv. 13.

The covenant of grace is a blessed treasury: There is armour of defence to be found against every assault and danger. If the promises of the covenant be ours, we shall be secured of a happy final issue of all our sufferings: *All things shall work together for our good;* Rom. viii. 28. *If God be for us, who shall be against us?* verse 31. If we behold God engaged on our side, we may defy a legion of adversaries in the name of the Lord our God. *Thou art my glory,* says the Psalmist, *and my shield, and the lifter up of my head;* Psalm iii. 3. The little word, *my,* shews his own interest in his God, and then he can grow brave in the very centre of a thousand deaths and dangers. *I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about;* verse 6.

II. Get a large and general acquaintance with the promises of the gospel,* that in every special time of need you may have some suitable word of refuge and support. From the xl. to the xlv. chapters of Isaiah, there is a variety of rich encouragements against slavish fear: And there is another treasure of them from the l. to the lv. Many a christian has been able to live upon them in the most dangerous and distressing seasons. They are divine springs of courage, and they overflow with consolation. The assurances of holy David in the midst of his perils, have been a glorious support to the fearful soul. Several of his psalms are filled with the same heavenly cordials. You can hardly find three of them together, without some triumphs of faith in them. In the writings of the evangelists, and in the epistles, you may read many precious promises scattered abroad, to allay your fears. In the second and third chapters of the *Revelation,* they stand thick as the spangles of heaven: They sparkle like stars in the firmament at midnight, and they ever shine brightest in the darkest sky. It is with unknown pleasure that the soul of a christian contemplates and surveys those heavenly lights in his most gloomy and dismal hours, and they turn the shadows of death into morning.

Though it is of excellent use to have the mind and memory well stored with the various promises of the covenant, yet in some special seasons of trial, it is of eminent advantage to keep the mind and thoughts fixed upon some single promise, that is most suited to the present danger or suffering, and to the present taste and relish of the soul. In such a season, the running speedily from one promise to another, and skimming over them with a slight survey, will not be so effectual a relief, as fixing upon some peculiar and proper word of grace, and living upon it for a whole day together. Thus every morning you may take some new comforter with you, and let it abide upon your heart all day, and it will whisper to your soul with divine sweetness in the dark and solitary watches of the night. When some special terror possesses your thoughts, and the heavy oppression returns often upon your spirits, or when any fresh assault comes on you from without or within, fly to the word you have chosen for your refuge; repeat it often, and cleave to it by meditation. *The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the*

* A little book published lately by Mr. Samuel Clarke, of St. Alban's, is of excellent use for this purpose. The title of it is, "A Collection of the Promises of Scripture, under their proper Heads." 1720.

righteous runneth into it, and is safe; Prov. xviii. 10. And remember God has magnified his own word above all the rest of his name; *Psalm* cxxxviii. 2. Try this method, it has been successful and well approved, and I doubt not but that you will be able to attest the success of it through the aids of divine grace.

III. Preserve the spirit of prayer always in exercise, and the spirit of fortitude will descend on you. Address the throne of God with earnestness and faith, and cry to the Lord the God of your salvation without ceasing. It is he gives spirits to renew the battle when we are almost tired and grow weary; *Isaiah* xl. 28, 29. He gives courage in the midst of terrors, for he can preserve and secure us in the extremest perils. *We despaired of life,* saith the apostle, *and had the sentence of death in ourselves, but we were delivered, for we trusted in him that raiseth the dead;* 2 Cor. i. 8, 9, 10. It is he that repels the most imminent danger, it is he rebukes the spirit of fear, and gives us the spirit of power, and holy fortitude; 2 *Tim.* i. 7. *Wait on the Lord, and be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart; wait I say on the Lord;* Psalm xxvii. 14.

But be sure in all your addresses to the mercy-seat, have an eye to Christ Jesus the Mediator, your Advocate at the throne, and the Captain of your salvation, who is engaged to see you brought safe to heaven. The Father has intrusted you as sheep in his hand, and he will not suffer you to perish. Look to him as your great High-priest and Intercessor in heaven; and *since you have such a High-priest as Jesus the Son of God, who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need;* Heb. iv. 14, 15, 16. Many a feeble christian who has gone to the mercy-seat, trembling and terrified under huge apprehensions of danger, and almost overwhelmed with tumultuous fears, has risen up from his knees with a heavenly calmness and composure: The army of his fears has vanished at once, and he has gone out to face the most formidable of his adversaries with divine resolution and courage. *I sought the Lord and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked unto him and were enlightened, and their faces were not ashamed.—The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. O taste and see that the Lord is good: Blessed is the man that trusteth in him;* Psalm xxxiv. 4—8. *In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me, and didst strengthen me with strength in my soul;* Psalm cxxxviii. 3.

IV. Get a greater degree of weanedness from the flesh, and from all the delights and satisfactions that belong to this mortal life: Then as you will not feel so great a pain in being stripped of them, so neither will your soul be filled with terror, when you are in danger of losing them. Learn to put off a little of that sinful tenderness for self, which we brought into the world with us. One of the first lessons in the school of Christ, is self-denial; *Matt.* xvi. 24. *If any man will come after me, that is, be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*

It is a certain tender fondness for our flesh that makes us afraid of pain. It is a fondness for our name and reputation that makes us afraid of reproaches. It is a fondness for our possessions, and our easy circumstances in the world, that makes us afraid of poverty: And too great a fondness for life makes us afraid of dying. Whensoever therefore the cause of Christ plainly calls us to risk our name and honour in the world, to part with our wealth or our ease, and to venture to expose life itself, we shrink from the command; slavish and sinful fear prevails mightily upon us, because we love earth, and self and flesh better than we ought to do. We must subdue this self-love and unmanly soft-

ness, if we would approve ourselves as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and gain a spirit of sacred courage and resolution. We must be dead to the things of flesh and sense, and gain a victory over the complaints and groanings of nature. We must go as far as we can toward parting with right hands, and right eyes, in every sense of the words, if we would be christians indeed.

V. Endeavour to keep yourselves always employed in some proper work, that your fears may be diverted when they cannot immediately be overcome. If our thoughts and hands are idle and empty, we lie open to the invasion and tumult of our fears, and we give them leave to assault us on all sides.

The passion and principle of this slavish fear is mingled with our flesh and blood, and therefore we must employ even our flesh and blood in some better business, that we may turn the current of animal nature, and leave the imagination no leisure to sit brooding over its own terrors. Want of occupation and engagement of the powers of nature, exposes the mind of man to the inroad of all the frightful images that fancy can furnish out, and to all the terrifying suggestions of a watchful and malicious tempter. That wicked spirit has some strange and unknown methods of access to our souls: He will worry the sheep of Christ with terrors, when he is not suffered to devour or destroy them; and an unbusied mind is prepared to admit his worst temptations.

But while I am pressing you to find out some employment for yourselves, take care that it be such as may approve itself to God and your own consciences. We must be ever found in the way of duty, as I hinted before, if we would support a holy courage. It is only the righteous that has just reason to be bold as a lion: Be ready to meet Christ the Judge, and his glorious appearance at all times, and then you need not fear all that earth or hell can do against you.

If this Sermon be too long, it may be divided here.

Let us proceed now to propose some further remedies against this slavish passion of fear.

VI. Keep your eye fixed on the hand of God in all the affairs of men. View his powerful and over-ruling providence in all things, even in those things that awaken your most troublesome fears. Think with yourselves, that you put creatures in the place of God, if you fear them more than God, as though they were the sovereign lords and disposers of all your comforts. Learn to see God in all things, and behold him in all things as your God, and then creatures will have but little influence to awaken any of the passions of the soul, or to raise distressing fears within you.

Are your spirits so weak, that thunder and lightning, and the storms of the air, affright you? Think who it is that commands the tempests to arise, and quashes the storms at his pleasure. In whose hand is the thunder? Who kindles the lightning? Who directs the flashes, and guides every sweeping blast of wind or fire to its appointed place? Remember the disciples in the midst of the storm, and the language of Jesus walking upon the water, *It is I, be not afraid;* Matt. xiv. 27.

Or if the public commotions of the world awaken your fears, read the name and presence of God, even your God, in the xlvi. Psalm, and rejoice and stand firm amidst the tumult and shaking of the nations. *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be cast into the midst of the sea;* verses 2, 3. *The heathen raged, the kingdoms were*

moved: He uttered his voice, the earth melted; verse 6. *The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge;* verse 11. *Selah.**

Or perhaps more particular and personal dangers and afflictions threaten your good name, your estate, your flesh, your life. Well, the name of God in his presence is an universal spring of comfort and courage, a wide-spreading shield against every mischief.

Are you terrified at the thoughts of personal reproach and slander? Know that the tongues of men are within the reach of the hand of God, and he can cast a bridle of restraint upon them; but if he take off that restraint, and leave them to their own perverseness and rage, learn to say as good David, when Shimei cursed him; The hand of the Lord is in it, God hath given him a loose to curse me: And thus sweetly compose yourselves to an acquiescence in the providential will of your heavenly Father.

Is poverty and want the thing you dread? But is not God your heavenly Father? And can you not trust him to provide for his children? Will he give the young ravens their food, when they cry, and will he not feed his sons and his daughters? It is true you may be reduced to bread and water, and brought down to the very lowest circumstances, and you must submit to his will: God will feed your nature, though he will not feed your pride.

Are you affrighted at the thoughts of sickness and pain? Remember diseases are the servants of our Lord Christ; he can bid pains and anguish of body go or come as he pleases; nor can they seize you without his commission, nor tarry with you beyond his appointed moment. Commit your flesh to him as well as your spirit: He is a wise physician, and he will deal tenderly with you: He has worn flesh and blood, and has a sympathizing heart, nor will he grieve his own members beyond what his wisdom and love sees needful.

Are you afraid of persecuting enemies, that hunt you from place to place, and would pursue you even to the death? Remember that they are but the slaves of Satan, and they and their master are all in a chain, under the sovereign dominion of Christ your Lord. The wicked of the earth, in this sense, are called the hand of God; *Psalm* xvii. 14. They are but as instruments to execute his divine purposes, and they cannot move nor act beyond his permission. He put a hook in the nostrils of Sennacherib, that Assyrian wild beast, and a bridle into his jaws; he suffered him to come and gaze at Jerusalem, then in one night the angel of death destroyed all his army, and the Lord put a song of triumph into the mouth of his people.

In a time of persecution in the last century, some pious ministers were met together, expressing their mutual fears, and consulting how to provide for their own safety: When one stood up, in the spirit of faith, and said, *We are all immortal till our work is done;* whereby he declared his lively sense of the restraining power of God over the malice of men, and his assurance that God would preserve them in life, so long as he had any service to employ them in. This was in truth a sublime thought: A Roman orator or a Greek poet would have been admired and celebrated for it by all the critics: This was the language of faith, and it had a sublime and glorious effect; it dispersed their fears at once, and they went away rejoicing.

* That is an excellent treatise which Mr. Flavel has published against sinful fear, especially in times of public danger and persecution: And his little book of keeping the heart, has some valuable chapters in it, containing rich preservatives against this weakness of the mind.

VII. Recollect your own experiences of the goodness of God in carrying you through former seasons of danger and sorrow. *I will remember*, says David, *the works of the Lord, and his wonders of old;* Psalm lxxvii. 11. I will remember the special deliverances I have obtained in times of most imminent peril. Think with yourselves how high the tempest of your fears has sometimes risen, and God has sunk them at once into silence. Think how extreme your danger has been, when you have been perplexed in a wilderness of thorns, and have seen no way for your escape, but the eye of God hath found a path of safety for you, a path which the eagle's eye hath not seen: He has led you as one that was blind, by the way that you knew not; he has made darkness light before you, and crooked things straight, according to his promise; *Isaiah* xlii. 16.

And remember also, that sometimes when the very evil which you feared has fallen upon you, it has not been half so heavy and painful as your fears have represented it, and you have been enabled to bear that which you thought was intolerable. Remember the years of ancient time, and rejoice in that God who has often disappointed your fears of destruction, and has outdone all your hopes in a way of deliverance. *I said, I am cut off from the earth, and shall go to the gates of the grave; I reckoned from night till the morning that he will cut me off with pining sickness, from day even to night, he will make an end of me; But in love to my soul, O Lord, thou hast delivered it from the pit of corruption, for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.* Perhaps your own experience may teach you to sing this song of Hezekiah, as it is recorded, *Isaiah* xxxviii. 10—17. or to join with holy David, and repeat his hymns of praise. And thus, beside your own experiences, you may review the happy experiences of the saints of old, or of christians in later times, and encourage your faith in opposition to all your fears.

VIII. Charge your conscience solemnly with the authority of the divine command to suppress your fears. Remember that the exercises of faith, courage, and holy firmness of soul, are duties as well as blessings. Read how often the great God forbids his people to indulge their fears; *Isaiah* xl. 10, 13, 14. xliii. 1, 5. xliv. 2, 8. *Fear not* is a command perpetually repeated, because God well knew how prone our feeble natures are to be affrighted at every appearance of danger: And even when he calls his people Jacob a *worm*, and confesses the extreme weakness of their nature under that emblem, yet he insists on the same precept still, *Fear not thou worm Jacob;* Isaiah xli. 14.

Our blessed Lord joins frequently in the same prohibition of a slavish fear; Matt. x. 28. *Fear not them which can kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but fear him rather who can destroy body and soul in hell.* And Peter, who once wanted courage, and denied his Lord, in his elder and better days grew bolder for the name of Christ, and he forbids us *to be afraid or troubled at the terror of men;* 1 Pet. iii. 13. He repeats the charge of the prophet Isaiah, *sanctify the Lord of hosts in your heart;* Isaiah viii. 13. the Lord of hosts alone is the proper object of our supreme fear. This will over-rule and abolish all other fears, as the little noises of earth are lost in the thunders of heaven. The fear of God in a sublime degree will be an effectual cure of our sinful fear of creatures.

It is true the principle of fear is a natural affection; it is rooted in flesh and blood; it grows high and domineers, especially in some constitutions, and when the natural spirits are enfeebled, it still gains the greater ascendancy over us: But if it be indulged and encouraged, it soon becomes sinful, for it seems to stand opposite to the grace of faith, and too often prevails over it. Therefore Christ chides his disciples, when they

were affrighted in the storm while he was in the ship? *Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?* Mark iv. 40. And even when Peter was walking upon the water, and Christ was near him, he saith, *O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?* Matt. xiv. 31. For a christian to give himself up to the wild tyranny of his fears, is contrary to the very spirit and design of the gospel of Christ; *Rom.* viii. 15. *Ye have not received the spirit of bondage to fear, but the spirit of adoption; the spirit of power and love;* 2 Tim. i. 7. Remember then you are the sons and daughters of God: It is below the dignity of your character to yield to this slavery, and your Father himself reproves, and your Redeemer forbids it.

IX. Think of the many advantages that arise from a holy fortitude of spirit in the midst of dangers. This divine temper of mind will establish your feet on a rock in the midst of storms; it will animate you to practise every duty, and to prevent many of the mischiefs you fear. This will preserve the soul in a sacred serenity and calmness under all the gloomy and painful events of providence. Without this firmness of spirit you can never practise what Christ commands his disciples, and that is, *to possess their souls in patience in the hour of their distress;* Luke xxi. 19. But we may keep up the government of ourselves by a holy fortitude and calm submission to the will of God. This will make sorrows lighter, and the heaviest afflictions become more tolerable.

Whereas, if we give a loose to fear, it throws the whole frame of nature into a tumultuous hurry and confusion, it takes away the use of prudence to contrive the proper means for our escape, it cuts the sinews of our most active powers, and enfeebles our whole nature, so that we become an easy prey to every adversary. The more we are affrighted, the less able are we to defend ourselves.

Fear is a dreadful bondage of the soul, and it holds the man in chains: Therefore in the text just now cited, the spirit of fear is called a spirit of bondage. It is this that brings the soul down to taste the bitterness, and to feel the smart of those very evils which affright us at a distance, and which perhaps never come near us. Those very sufferings which are prevented by the mercy of God, we endure them in our thoughts, and feel the pain of them by an indulgence of an excessive fear. We suffer an affliction once, if we are overwhelmed with the terror of it: And if at last it does really overtake us, we double the suffering, and make the pain the longer. Oftentimes, in cases of bodily distempers, the fear itself brings the disease, and aggravates all the symptoms. If we could read the records of the grave, we should find that many a person has been oppressed, and sunk down to death, by the excessive fear of dying.

The last remedy of fear which I shall mention is this, suppose the worst that can come, and be calmly prepared for it: This will be a mighty relief against the tyranny of our fears.

You are afraid of losing your honour among men, afraid to bear the scourge of their tongues and bitter reproaches: But think with yourselves, when slander and falsehood have done their worst, it is but the wind of the breath of man, and this cannot hurt your best interest, while you stand approved of God. Infamy amongst men is but a trifling evil, if compared with praise, honour, and glory among the saints before the throne, and the applause of Jesus and his angels at the last great day.

You are frighted with the hideous appearance of poverty, because scorn attends it as well as want. But our blessed Lord had not where to lay his head; he was fed by

the bounty of kind friends and pious women, who ministered to him of their substance. The great and the wise, the rich, and the learned of that day, made him their mockery: The very finger of scorn pointed at him in the streets: And why should the disciple think it necessary that he should be above his Lord? You may be *poor in this world, and at the same time rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom;* James ii. 5.

You are afraid of sickness and pains of the flesh, and your life becomes a burthen to you, by reason of your constant dread of some infectious distempers. You shift your dwellings, you hide yourself at home, and yet you enjoy no peace. Suppose the distemper should seize you, has not sickness often brought your soul nearer to God? And if your outward man has decayed, your inward man and your best interest have had a rich advancement thereby.

You are terrified at the threatenings of bloody men. It must be granted, that flesh has a strong empire over the soul, where dangers of torment and death appear. But suppose men of violence kill the body, then you will be dismissed at once from all their fury, and from your own fears. Their terror cannot reach beyond the grave; that is a safe and peaceful hiding-place.

But perhaps you are frighted at the thoughts of dying, even in the common way of nature: It may be, the king of terrors dresses himself in formidable airs, and shakes your very frame: But would you live here on earth for ever? A christian who has hopes and interests and possessions beyond the regions of time and sense, should not be afraid to enter upon them. Remember that death itself, even in its most formidable appearance, is ordained of God to open the door of heaven for you, and let your souls into the joy of eternal life: The grace of your Redeemer, and the epistle of St. Paul, join to teach you this song "*O death, where is thy sting?* And *O grave, where is thy victory?*" 1 Cor. xv. 55.

Thus by keeping your soul in a ready preparation for the worst events that your fear can imagine, you overcome this tyrant of the soul, and triumph over this slavish passion. Thus you transform your very terrors into joys, and gather honey out of the lion, as Samson did. The more fatal your dangers are, the nearer is your final deliverance. Say to yourself, Is my feeble flesh tottering into the grave? Then my soul is so much nearer to the gates of glory. This is the holy skill of turning evil into good. Such a faith kept in lively exercise can make roses spring out of the midst of thorns, and change the briars of the wilderness into the fruit-trees of paradise. O what a state of divine and sacred peace does that christian enjoy, who can look stedfastly upon the face of danger, in its most frightful forms, and say through grace, I am prepared! *Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for my God is with me,* and he will be with me for ever.

Recollection—What progress hast thou made, O my soul, in acquiring this sacred fortitude? The former discourse has taught thee the necessity of it, and the various occasions for the exercise of it in the course of the christian life. In this latter sermon thou hast heard the motives that should awaken all thy powers, to obtain and practise it, and thou hast been informed what are some of the most sovereign remedies against thy foolish and sinful fears. Methinks I feel the want of this holy hardiness of soul, to walk through the midst of temptations unmoved, unterrified, and undefiled. My virtue and my religion have too often suffered by the prevailing power of a slavish fear: my conscience has lost its innocence and peace by too many sinful compliances. What shall

I do to harden my spirit all over, that temptation and slavish fear may not find a place to enter?

For this end I review the glorious motives set before me. For this end I look to the noble army of martyrs, to the blessed society of the apostles, to the cloud of witnesses which have trod the same path before me, who have borne an undaunted testimony to the same religion which I profess. I would chide and shame myself out of my sinful cowardice, while I behold their illustrious examples of zeal. But above all, I fix my eye upon Jesus, the divine Author of this religion, *the Author and Finisher of my faith;* Heb. xii. 2. I would learn of the *Captain of my salvation, who was made perfect through sufferings;* Heb. ii. 10. I would learn of my divine Teacher, to endure hardships like a good soldier of Christ, while I fight under his banner, against those very enemies that he hath subdued.

Consider, my soul, what thou art: What is thy character and profession: If thou art a christian indeed, thou hast taken up arms against sin and Satan, and a world that is in rebellion against God: And shall the frown of a man make thee drop thy weapons, and discourage thee from the glorious service? Thou hast many rich encouragements to expect divine assistance: Many joyful assurances of victory are given to them that endure in the day of conflict, and a glorious crown stands ready for those that overcome. O may the crown of glory sparkle in my eye, and grow brighter and larger by a nearer view, and a perpetual contemplation of it! Make me forgetful of ease and health, O my God, and of all my mortal interests, while I press forward with sacred courage to lay hold on this crown! Blessed Saviour, make me triumph over every difficulty, till death, the last of all my enemies, be subdued, and I have obtained the glorious prize.

I would shake myself out of my fears, and awaken my zeal by such motives as these. And O that I could treasure up in my memory the various remedies of which I have heard this day, to heal this infirmity of my nature, and to overcome these foolish and sinful terrors of spirit! I will review my faith, and the grounds of my hope, that I may know that I am a christian indeed, that I am one of the sheep of Christ, and under his divine care; and I would watch against every temptation, lest I contract a new guilt and defilement, and thereby darken my evidences and awaken my fears. I would survey with pleasure the gracious words of promise, which are scattered up and down in the book of God. O may the blessed Spirit print many of them upon my heart, that they may be always present with me, and that I may find them within my reach, and ready at hand as a special cordial in every fainting hour! I would run to them as my sure refuge in every season of danger and conflict, and be animated to confront a sinful world.

Give me, O my God, give me the spirit of prayer, and let me keep ever near to the throne of grace, that my soul may not come thither as a stranger, but that in every surprize I may address thee as a God near at hand, and that in the name of my great High-priest, Jesus the Son of God, I may find grace ready to help me in the time of need.

Wean me, O Lord, from all the delights and hopes of flesh and sense! Mortify me to all the honours and the joys of a perishing life, and a vain world. Arm my soul all over with a religious hardiness, that I may venture into the field of battle, and may scarce feel the wounds which I receive in thy cause. Give me the happy skill of diverting my fears, when I cannot at once subdue them and lead me into proper employments of my heart and hand for this purpose.

I would live as under the eye of God. I would take notice of his hand in all the affairs of life, and all the dangers that attend me. I would learn of Moses to endure the fight of afflictions, as seeing him who is invisible. Let me hear thy voice, O Jesus, my Saviour, let me hear thy voice walking upon the waters; when I am tossed about upon the waves of distress and difficulty, speak to my soul, and say, It is I, be not afraid.

Surely I have had some experience of the Divine Presence with me in the midst of dangers: God has sometimes disappointed all my fears, and interposed his shield of power and love for my defence: Why should not I trust a faithful God, and that infinite goodness which I have already tasted of? I charge my conscience with the authority of thy word. O Lord, when thou forbiddest all my sinful fears, I would renounce them too, I would struggle to break these painful fetters, and fight against this inward slavery of the soul, these domestic tyrants. O that the spirit of power were always with me, to dispel the spirit of bondage!

I would be bravely prepared for the worst of sufferings to which my circumstances in this life may expose me. I would be ready to meet contempt and scandal, poverty, sickness, and death itself. Jesus can support me in the heaviest distresses, though all the sorrows I fear should come upon me. He can bear me on the wings of faith and hope, high above all the turmoils and disquietudes of life: He can carry me through the shadow of the dark valley, and scatter all the terrors of it. Give me, O Lord, these wings of faith and hope, and bear me upon them through all the remains of my short journey in the wilderness: Make me active and zealous in thy cause while I live, and convey me safely above the reach of fear, through the valley of death, to the inheritance prepared for me in the land of light. Then my fears shall cease for ever, for enemies and dangers are not known in that land. There all our conflicts shall be changed into everlasting triumphs, while songs of honour and salvation ascend in a full choir to the grace that has made us overcomers. *Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMON XXXII.

HOLY FORTITUDE, OR REMEDIES AGAINST FEAR.

I.

WHEN tumults of unruly fear
Rise in my heart, and riot there,
What shall I do to calm my breast,
And get the vexing foe suppress?

II.

What power can these wild thoughts controul,
This ruffling tempest of the soul?
Where shall I fly in this distress,
But to the throne of glorious grace?

III.

My faith would seize some promise, Lord;
There's power and safety in thy word:
Not all that earth or hell can say,
Shall tempt or drive my soul away.

IV.

I call the days of old to mind,
When I have found my God was kind;
My heav'nly friend is still the same;
Salvation to his holy name.

V.

Great God, preserve my conscience clean,
Wash me from guilt, forgive my sin,
Thy love shall guard me from surprize,
Though threat'ning dangers round me rise.

VI.

When fear like a wild ocean raves,
Let Jesus walk upon the waves,
And say, "'tis I:" that heavenly voice
Shall sink the storm, and raise my joys.

SERMON XXXIII.

THE UNIVERSAL RULE OF EQUITY.

MATT. vii. 12.

ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER YE WOULD THAT MEN SHOULD DO UNTO YOU, DO YE EVEN SO UNTO THEM; FOR THIS IS THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS.

WHEN our blessed Lord took upon him the public office of a prophet or teacher amongst men, he found it was not only necessary to instruct them in the sacred mysteries of religion, and inform them of their duty to God his Father, and to himself; but he employed much of his ministry also, to teach them the practice of social virtue, and how they should behave toward their fellow-creatures. In the heathen world the rules of morality were lost in a great measure, as well as the rules of piety and worship; and the Jews, the peculiar people of God, had grossly corrupted both the one and the other. As our Saviour refined the practice of religion towards God, and raised it by his gospel, to a high and heavenly degree, beyond what mortals had known before, so he explained and established the rules of moral virtue, in a more glorious and convincing manner than the world had been acquainted with.

Read his life, and observe how often he takes occasion in the several seasons of his preaching, to give particular directions for our conduct towards our neighbours. But after all, he knew that the nature of man was corrupt, his passions strong, his memory frail, and that he would be ready to neglect or forget his various sacred precepts, when there was most need to practise them; and therefore he thought it proper to give one short and comprehensive rule of equity to regulate all our conduct, that should be written as it were in our very souls: And this is contained in the words of my text, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them; for this is the law and the prophets.*

To dilate a little upon this subject, and refresh a living sense of it upon your memories and your consciences, I shall follow this method, and enquire,

I. What is the true meaning of this divine rule.

II. What is the special argument that our Lord uses in order to enforce it.

III. Wherein the particular excellencies of it appear.

IV. I shall conclude with some reflections on this subject.

First, What is the true meaning of this rule?

In order to understand this rule aright, we must consider what it does not require, as well as what it does: For on the one side, some selfish necessitous and unreasonable persons may expect more from us than this rule obliges us to perform: And on the other side, a timorous and weak conscience may perhaps be led into a mistake, and think itself bound by this rule to perform some instances of kindness to others, which are utterly unreasonable and unrequired, and which might be injurious on other accounts to ourselves, or to our families, or to the rest of mankind.

We must remember then, that this rule does not mean to oblige us to give all that to another, or do all that for another, which we could possibly desire or wish to be bestowed upon us, or done for us; but whatsoever we could reasonably desire, and justly expect another should do to us, that we ought to do to him when he is in the like circumstances. All that in our calm and sedate thoughts we judge fit and proper another should do for us, that we should practise and do for him. Such requests as we could make to others, and could justify them to ourselves in our own consciences, according to the principles of humanity, the rules of civil society, and the rights of mankind, such we ought not to deny to others when they stand in need. Not all that a fond self-love would prompt us to ask, but all that our conscience tells us we might with reason expect.

I shall mention an instance or two, which will more fully explain what I mean.

A criminal under righteous condemnation for murder or robbery, may think thus with himself, *Surely I would pardon the judge or the prince if he were in my circumstances; therefore he ought to pardon me.* Or the judge himself might think, *I should be glad to be pardoned or not condemned if I were in the case of this criminal, therefore I will not condemn him.* This sort of thoughts arising from unreasonable and unjust principles, either of a sinful self-love, or indulgence to iniquity, are not to be the measure of our actions nor expectations; these are not just and reasonable desires, nor can our own conscience in our sedate and calm enquiries judge so concerning them.

Again, if we were poor and starving, it may be we would be glad if our rich neighbour would settle upon us a competent estate, sufficient to maintain us for the term of our lives; but this we cannot reasonably expect, or reasonably desire and demand; therefore we are not bound, be our circumstances never so large, to settle such a competency upon our poor neighbours, be their circumstances never so mean. We cannot rationally expect these things should be done unto us, we cannot equitably desire them of another, therefore we are not bound to do thus to another.

But if we are placed as criminals at the bar of judgment, we may reasonably expect that all the favourable circumstances which attend our accusation, should be well weighed, and all the kind allowances made, which the nature of the charge or crime will admit; for our consciences would think it reasonable to allow so much to any criminal, if we ourselves were placed in the chair of magistracy. Or if we, through the frowns of providence, are poor and starving, we may reasonably expect our rich neighbour should bestow upon us a little of his bread, a little of his clothing, to supply our extreme necessities now and then; and thus much our neighbour may expect from us, when he is fallen into decay by the providence of God, while our circumstances are large, and we are well furnished for such bounty.

Thus you see the true intent and meaning of this universal law of equity, *viz.* That we practise toward our neighbour in such a manner as our own hearts and consciences would think it reasonable he should practise towards us in the like case. The

Second enquiry was this. What special argument doth our Lord use to enforce the observance of this sacred precept?

When our Saviour had laid down this general rule, he adds, "This is the law and the prophets;" that is, this is the summary of all the rules of duty, which are written in the law of Moses, concerning our carriage to our neighbour, and of all the laws which are explained by the succeeding prophets, and sacred writers under the Old Testament.

They are all comprehended in this short line; *Do to others as you would have others do to you.* It is very near the same thing, in other words, with the law of Moses. *Love thy neighbour as thyself;* Lev. xix. 18. but it is much plainer and more intelligible: And indeed this rule of Moses is to be understood and interpreted, and applied in practice according to this plain rule of Christ, thus, "Let thy love to thy neighbour be as great as thou canst reasonably expect or desire thy neighbour's love should be to thyself."

When our blessed Lord gives an abridgment or abstract of the ten commandments, he doth it in these words; *Matt.* xxii. 37, 38, 39. *Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul, that is, love God above all things; this is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it; love thy neighbour as thyself;* that is, consider him as a piece of human nature, as a second self, and imitate thy love to thyself in thy conduct toward him: Or, according to my text, it may be explained thus; enquire of thy own heart how thou wouldst have him love thee, and let this be the rule and measure of thy love to him. All our duties to God or man, all the commands of the first and the second table, all the dictates of the law and prophets depend on these two commandments.

Then we answer the design of the law, then we obey the prophets, then we fulfil the commands of Moses, and of Christ, when we give to God our supreme love, and when we put ourselves in the room of our neighbour, and then carry it toward him, according to the love we expect he should bear to us. This is *loving our neighbours as ourselves*, and this *love is fulfilling of the law;* Rom xiii. 10.

When our Saviour delivers the words of my text, it is as if he had said to us, "If ye would practise all the duties that you owe to your fellow-creatures, and fulfil all the laws of the second table, in the most compendious and perfect manner, remember and practise this one general direction, deal with the rest of mankind as your conscience judges they should deal with you." But this leads me to the

Third enquiry, *viz.* wherein do the peculiar excellencies of this rule appear?

This golden rule hath many excellent properties belonging to it. I shall mention a few on purpose to impress it on your consciences with more conviction, pleasure, and power.

I. It is a rule that is easy to be understood, and as easy to be applied by the meanest and weakest understanding. It is so plain, that what is said by Isaiah concerning all the precepts of the gospel, is more eminently true of this; *it is a highway of holiness, and the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein;* Isaiah xxxv. 8. The laws of man are often expressed in such obscure language and terms of art, that they puzzle us to find out the meaning of them: And the nice distinctions and subtle reasonings of men, oftentimes add to their darkness, and raise new disputes: But this is a law that every man understands; nor is it easy to be clouded by the comments and glosses of crafty men, if we are but sincerely resolved to judge and practise according to it. By the means of this rule, they who never studied the civil law, nor took pains in enquiring the moral dictates of the light of nature; they who never examined the statutes of a nation, nor the rules of natural justice, are all furnished with a law or rule of equity in their own minds, by which to manage their whole practice, with regard to their neighbours. Those who are not capable of long trains of reasoning, or of applying several general rules to all their particular cases; yet are able to look into their own hearts, and to ask this easy question, "Would I myself be content to have others deal thus with me? Why then should I deal thus with another?"

II. It is a very short rule, and easy to be remembered: The weakest memory can

retain it; and the meanest of mankind may carry this about with them, and have it ready upon all occasions. It is of admirable use, to solve a thousand cases of conscience that may arise on the sudden, and may perplex our minds with difficulty. "It lies ready," says a considerable author, "For present use upon all exigencies and occasions. We can scarce be so far surprized by an immediate necessity of acting, as not to have time for a short recourse to this rule, or room for a sudden glance, as it were, upon it in our minds, where it rests and sparkles always like the Urim and Thummim on the breast of Aaron."

If we have no written cases of conscience, no books at hand to direct our practice, if we have no faithful minister near us, no wise and pious friend to consult on a sudden occasion, this one rule, written in the heart, may serve instead of all other helps. This blessed precept strikes a sudden and sacred light into the mind, where the case may seem intricate: It shines upon our way, and makes our path plain, where an honest and scrupulous conscience might be just before bewildered in the dark, and not know how to act. "Practise that, O man! toward thy neighbour, which thou art convinced thy neighbour should practise toward thee."

III. This excellent precept of Christ, carries greater evidence to the conscience, and a stronger degree of conviction in it, than any other rule of moral virtue. As I said before, that a little reason will serve to apply it, so I say now, there is not much need of reasoning to find it out; for we fetch the proof of it from within ourselves, even from our own inward sensation and feeling. If we would know what is just and equitable to do to our neighbour, we need but ask our own inward sense, and our conscience together, what we would think equitable and just to receive from him? Thus there is but one and the same measure of justice, by which we must mete it out to ourselves and others; and that measure lies within us, even in the heart. We are very sensible of benefits and injuries that we ourselves receive, and this very sense of injuries and benefits is, as it were, transcribed into our conscience, from the tenderest part of our own souls, and becomes there a rule of equity, how we should treat our neighbours.

It is a most righteous precept of the ancient Jewish law, and of universal obligation, *Deut.* xxv. 13, 14, 15. *Thou shalt not have in thy bag, or in thine house, divers weights, and divers measures: a great and a small: That is, one wherewith to buy, and another wherewith to sell; but thou shalt have a perfect and just weight; a perfect and just measure shalt thou have.* This precept as soon as it is mentioned, strikes the conscience with conviction of the justice of it: And what is said here of traffic and dealing, holds as truly of the general commerce between man and man, in all the ordinary and extraordinary affairs of life: That mutual exchange of good offices, whereby society is upheld, must be regulated in the same manner, and by the same rule; and the immediate conviction of the equity of it, doth as strongly strike the conscience. "There must be a perfect weight, and a just measure, saith the author before-cited, by which all men are mutually obliged to regulate their conduct, in acting and suffering, in commanding and obeying, in giving and receiving: and this can be no other than the equal and righteous rule of the text; the doing in all cases and to all persons, even as we would be done unto. There is no one so absurd and unreasonable, as not to see, and acknowledge the absolute equity of this command in the theory, however he may swerve and decline from it in his practice." For, it is founded not only in the reason of things, and in the common share, and equal interest that we all have in human nature; but it is also

written in the most sensible and the tenderest part of our constitution; and from thence it is derived to the mind and judgment, as a law of behaviour towards our fellow-creatures.

IV. Hence it comes to pass, that it is a precept particularly fitted for practice, because it includes in it a powerful motive to stir us up to do what it enjoins. This character of it, I borrow from the same author, who talks thus upon it: "Other moral maxims propose naked truths to the understanding, which operate often but faintly and slowly on the will and passions, the two active principles of the mind of man: But it is the peculiar character of this rule, that it addresseth itself equally to all these powers, even to the passions and the will, as well as the understanding. It not only directs, but influences; it imparts both light and heat; and at the same time that it informs us clearly what we are to do, excites us also in the most tender and moving manner, to the performance of it; for in truth, its seat is not more in the brain, than in the heart of man: It appeals to our very senses themselves, and exerts its secret force in so prevailing a way, that it is even felt as well as understood by us."

"There is nothing that we know, that gives a man so true and lively a sense of the sufferings of others, or restrains him so powerfully from doing unrighteous and oppressive things, as his having smarted formerly himself under the experience of them. Now the supposing another man's ill usage to be our own, is the giving ourselves a present sense, as it were, and a kind of feigned experience of it; which doth, for the time, serve all the purposes of a true one."

V. It is such a rule, as, if well applied, will almost always secure our neighbour from injury, and secure us from guilt, if we should chance to hurt him. God will not impute guilt to us, if we should happen to mistake in a point of doubtful enquiry, and to hurt our neighbour by a conscientious obedience to this rule.

I say, it will almost always secure us from injuring our neighbour. I cannot say, it is always an absolute, infallible, and certain rule of right and wrong; for our knowledge of the eternal rules of right and wrong is but imperfect; neither our own heads or hearts, are furnished with all the various and particular principles of equity. A mere enquiry into our own hearts or consciences, can never give us a perfect knowledge of the abstracted rules of justice: Nor can it determine us to the certain practice of it, in all the most intricate cases, unless these perfect rules of justice were fully written in the heart of every man. But under the present circumstances of mankind, in this poor, ignorant, and corrupt state of human nature, it appears to be the best, the most righteous, the most secure, and the most universal rule that ever could be invented or given to men; for it will certainly secure and prevent every man from injuring his neighbour in all cases, except where he himself is willing and content to receive equal injury: And I am sure, self-love will tell us, that these cases are exceeding few.

It is evident therefore, that an honest man will scarce ever mistake in keeping close to this rule. And if I should then happen to do an injury to my neighbour, instead of strict equity, yet I can appeal to God, and say; I endeavoured to apply this rule to my conscience, in the present circumstances, with the utmost sincerity; I acted no otherwise to my neighbour, than I desired or judged it reasonable for my neighbour to act towards me in the like case. And surely my unavoidable mistake will not be imputed to me as a crime, where I have honestly followed the rule my Saviour has given me, and acted therein according to the best capacity of my judgment.

VI. It is a rule as much fitted to awaken us to sincere repentance upon the transgression of it, as it is to direct us to our present duty. This rule abides in the bosom of a christian, it dwells so near him, that it is, as it were, mingled with conscience itself: and by this means it becomes not only a safe guide, but a sharp reprover too: It soon puts us in mind where either inclination or practice warps toward injustice and deceit. Have we never felt our conscience stinging us with a bitter reflection derived from this rule, when we have neglected in any instance to fulfil our duty to our neighbour? I am sure if we kept it much in view, we could neither practise injustice with ease of mind, nor dwell long under this guilt, without some inward reproaches: If the precept had not power enough to restrain us from present sin, yet it would spur us on to serious and speedy repentance.

Here the sermon may be divided, if it be too long to be read in a family at once.

VII. It is a most extensive rule, with regard to all the stations, ranks, and characters of mankind; for it is perfectly suited to them all: And I think it may be said, that it is equally useful to the rich and the poor, to the buyer and the seller, to the prince and to the peasant, to the master and the servant: They all come under the single rule of duty and justice: This should govern them in all their conduct. Be your condition, O christians, what it will in the world, do but put yourselves into the circumstances of one another, in your own thoughts, for a moment, and ask what is reasonable to be done to yourselves? And your consciences will return a speedy and easy answer what you should do to others.

Let the tenant say, "If I were a landlord, what should I think reasonable that my tenant should pay me?" And the landlord should ask himself, "Were I a tenant, what should I claim of my landlord?" I would have the master enquire, "What should I expect, if I were a servant, at the hand of my master?" And let the servant say, "What, if I were a master, should I expect from the hands of one that served me?" Parents should ask themselves, "If I had been a negligent child, and guilty of some trifling offence, could I think it just my father should be in such a passion with me?" And the son should enquire, "If I were a father, would I not think it reasonable my child should obey me in such particular instances or commands?" Thus the landlord and tenant, thus the master and servant, thus the father and the son may come to an adjustment of their mutual obligations.

The merchant should say to himself, "If I were an artificer, should I think it reasonable that the labour of my hands, and the sweat of my brows, should be screwed down to so cheap a price?" The seller of goods should say, "If I were the buyer, would I think it just to have such corrupt or faulty wares put into my hands? Am I willing to have my necessity, my ignorance, or unwariness thus imposed upon?" And the buyer should ask himself, "If I were the seller, should I bear to have my goods thus run down and depreciated below their just value?"

The learned professions may also learn their duty from this rule. The lawyer should say to himself, "What if I were the client, should I think it equitable to have my cause so long delayed, by so many shiftings and escapes, from a determination?" The physicians and the surgeons should put themselves in the places of their sick or wounded patients, and say, "Do we prescribe never a potion, or use never a plaister more than we would think proper for ourselves, if we were languishing under the same sickness or

wounds? Do we take the same safe and speedy methods of relief for others that we would have applied to ourselves?" And the preachers of the gospel should place themselves in the room of their hearers, and say, "Do we labour in our closets, in our secret hours of retirement, and in our public ministrations, for the conversion and salvation of those who hear us, as we would have ministers do for us, if we were perishing in our sins, and in danger of eternal death? Do we take such pains to awaken the slumberers upon the borders of hell, as we ourselves would have others take, in order to awaken us out of such fatal slumbers? Do we study and contrive with what divine cordials we shall refresh and comfort the mourners in Zion, even as we should desire to be comforted and refreshed?" Such sort of self-enquiries as these, will lead us to the practice of our present duty, and solve many a difficult case of conscience better than turning over the largest volumes.

VIII. This sacred rule is a most comprehensive one, with regard to all the actions and duties that concern our neighbours. It is not confined merely to the practice of justice, but it extends much wider and farther: It is of mighty influence in the direction and practice of meekness, of patience, of charity, of truth and faithfulness, and every kind of social virtue, and a most happy guard against every social vice.

It would be endless to enter into all the special cases of vice and virtue, which relate to the social life, and to shew how much they are affected by this rule, and what divine advantages we may attain for the practice of morality, by keeping this one sentence ever upon our thoughts. Yet I cannot pass over so important a theme, without giving a short specimen of some of these advantages.

This golden precept would teach us how to regulate our temper and general behaviour in the world. Am I not willing to be treated in an affable and civil manner by those who converse with me? Let me treat others then with all becoming civility, and make it appear that christianity is a religion of true honour, and that a christian is indeed a well-bred man. Do I think it unreasonable that my neighbour, though he be my superior, should assume haughty airs and disdain me? Let me watch therefore against all such scornful speeches and disdainful airs, when I converse with one, who is inferior to me. Do I think it a grievous thing, that a man should break out into sudden passion against me, if I happen to speak a word contrary to his sentiment, or to set himself in a rage for a trifle? Let me set a strict guard then over all my passionate powers, and learn to bear opposition without impatience. Let me quench the first risings of sudden anger, lest they kindle into an ungoverned flame, and hurry me on to the practice of what I condemn in others.

This excellent rule would teach us tenderness and beneficence to those that are unhappy. We should never make a jest of the lame or the blind, the crooked or the deformed; we should never ridicule the natural infirmities of the meanest of our fellow-creatures, nor their providential disadvantages, if we did but put ourselves in the room of the blind and lame, the deformed and the poor, and ask whether we should think it just and reasonable to be made the mockery and the jest of those that behold us. We should certainly be inclined to visit the sick, and feed the hungry, to give drink to him that is a-thirst, and to secure the feeble and helpless from the oppression of the mighty, if we enquired of our own hearts, what treatment we should expect if we were hungry and thirsty, if we were sick and helpless.

This blessed command of our Saviour would incline us to reprove with gentleness, to punish with mercy, and never to censure others without a just reason, and a plain call of providence; for we ourselves desire and would reasonably expect this sort of treatment from others. If we carried this sentence always in our memories, should we blaze abroad scandalous reports before we know the truth of them; and publish doubtful suspicions of our neighbour's guilt? Should we blacken his character to the utmost, even where there is a real crime, and make no reasonable allowances for him? Should we perpetually teaze children, servants, or friends with old faults, and make their follies and miscarriages the matter of our delightful conversation? Should we censure every little deviation from the truth, as heresy? Should we pronounce anathemas and curses upon him that leaves out of his creed a few hard words which men have invented, or that differs from us in the business of meats and days, and ceremonies? We ourselves think it hard to have doubtful reports of evil published concerning us, and suspicions blown up into guilt: We think it hard if our crimes are aggravated to the utmost, and no reasonable allowances are made: We find it very painful to us, and think it unreasonable to be ever teazed with the mention of our former follies, or to have our little differences from another's faith or worship to be pronounced heresy, and to be cut off from the church for it.

In short, if this blessed rule of our Saviour did but more universally obtain, we should never persecute one another for our disagreement in opinion, for we should then learn this lesson, that another has as much right to differ from me in his sentiment, as I have to differ from him. If this rule did but prevail amongst all that own the christian name; then truth, honesty and justice, meekness and love would reign and triumph through all the churches of Christ, and those vile affections and practices of pride, envy, wrath, cruelty, backbiting, and persecution would be banished for ever from amongst us.

IX. It is not only a rule of equity and love to direct our whole conduct toward our neighbours in the social life, but it is also a rule of the highest prudence with regard to ourselves; and it promotes our own interest in the best manner: For if we make conscience of treating our neighbours according to all the justice and tenderness that this rule will incline us to, we may reasonably expect the same kind and tender treatment from those that are round about us. Such a practice will naturally engage the greatest part of mankind on our side, whensoever we happen to be assaulted or oppressed by the sons of malice or violence. Happy is that person who has gained the love of mankind, by making the love of himself a rule and measure of his actions toward them, and has piously followed that precept of the law of God, *Love thy neighbour as thyself.*

Let us remember that we live in a changeable world, and the scenes of life are continually shifting. I am now a master, and in possession of riches, and if I treat my servant, or any poor man insolently, I may expect the like insolent treatment if my circumstances sink, and reduce me to a state of poverty or service. But if I follow this golden rule of our Saviour, in treating my inferiors, I do, as it were, hoard up for myself a treasure of merit and benevolence amongst men, which I may hope to receive and taste of, in the day of my necessity and distress. Thus in behaving myself toward others according to this holy rule of friendship, I not only please and obey my God and my Saviour, but I happily secure my temporal interests also.

X. In the last place, to mention no more, This rule is fitted to make the whole world as happy as the present state of things will admit. It is not to be described nor conceived

what a multitude of blessings and felicities the practice of this single precept would introduce among all mankind.

If we were not thus wrapped up entirely in self, in our own party, or in our own kindred, but could look upon our neighbours as ourselves, and seek their advantage together with our own, every man would become a diffusive blessing amongst his neighbours, and the mutual benefits of mankind would scatter happiness through all the world. In such a beneficent state as this, every man would be, as it were, a good angel to all that came within the reach of his commerce: This earth would be a little image of heaven; and our present social life amongst men would be a foretaste of our future happiness among saints and angels. In those glorious regions, every one rejoices in the welfare of the whole community, and they have a double relish of their own personal blessedness, by the pleasure they take in contributing to the blessedness of all their fellows.

Thus have I given a short and very imperfect account of the excellencies of this sacred rule of equity and love, and named some of the advantages it has above most other precepts of morality. It remains only that I make two or three reflections on so agreeable a subject.

Reflection I. In what a compendious method has our Saviour provided for the practice of all the moral duties enjoined by Moses and the prophets! For he has summed them up in a very few words, and reduced them to one short rule; but the extent and comprehension of it is universal, and almost infinite. Though we should forget twenty particular precepts of love and righteousness, yet if this be fresh in our thoughts, and always ready at hand, we shall practise all those particular precepts effectually, by the mere influence of this one general rule. It is true, it is a real advantage toward our practice of virtue and justice, to have the mind stored with special precepts, suited particularly to every case; but where the memory is defective, or other rules are not learned, this golden one will do very much towards supplying the place of many. Our Saviour himself grants this truth, when he says, *This is the law and the prophets.*

II. What divine wisdom is manifested in making this golden rule of equity a fundamental law, in the two most famous religions that ever God appointed to the children of men; that is, the Jewish and the christian! *Love thy neighbour as thyself*, was a rule appointed to the Jews; *Lev.* xix. 18. This is repeated by our Saviour; *Matt.* xix. 19. And an happy explication or comment on it given in my text, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so unto them; for this is the law and the prophets.* There were none of the heathen philosophers that delivered this as a general law, in so strong, so universal, and so comprehensive a manner as our Saviour has done, though one or two of them offered some occasional hints of the same kind. But our Saviour appoints it as the grand rule of social virtue, amongst all the subjects of his kingdom; and he tells us too, that this is the sum and substance of the directions given by Moses and the prophets for the conduct of men toward their fellow-creatures.

The wisdom of this precept eminently appears herein: Our blessed Lord well knew that self-love would be a powerful temptation to men, to turn them aside from the sacred laws of justice, in treating their neighbours; and therefore he wisely takes this very principle of self-love, and joins it in the consultation with our reason and conscience, how we should carry it toward our fellow-creatures. Thus by his divine prudence, he constrains

even this selfish and rebellious principle to assist our consciences and our rational powers, in directing us how to practise the social duties of life.

It was Christ the Son of God who gave laws to Moses for Israel before his incarnation, and it is he who is come in the flesh, as a preacher of righteousness to men, in these latter days; and in both these seasons of legislature, he has manifested this sacred wisdom. "*Ye know the heart of a stranger*, saith the Lord, in his dictates to Moses, Exod. xxiii. 9. *for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt; therefore thou shalt not oppress a stranger.*" And he gives us still the same general rule for our conduct: "Look into your own hearts, consider what human nature is, you know you are men of like frailty with others, enquire what treatment you would reasonably expect from your fellows, and be sure you practise in the same manner toward them."

III. Since the wisdom of Christ thought fit to teach us rules of equity and righteousness amongst men, and has, as it were, extracted the very soul and spirit of all social duties, and summed them up in this short sentence: Let not the disciples of Christ forget this rule; nor let the most eminent and exalted christians think it beneath their study and their practice. The love of God and Christ is not the whole of our duty, nor can we be christians indeed, if we neglect to love our neighbour. How vain are all our pretences to faith in Christ, and piety toward God, if we grow careless in our conduct toward men! All our fancied attainments in the school of Christ, how are they disgraced and destroyed, if we abandon this rule of moral virtue, and treat our neighbours, contrary to this divine principle of equity and love!

What shall we answer in the great judgment-day to an enquiring God, when in flaming fire he shall put us in mind? "I gave you a plain and easy rule of righteousness in my word, I wrote it in your hearts also, in very legible characters: If you had but looked carefully into your consciences, you might have read it there: But you resolved to sacrifice all to your lusts: you have wronged and defrauded your brethren, and exposed yourselves to my righteous sentence, for your wilful practice of unrighteousness against so plain a law."

It is a just remark which has been often made on this occasion: "The heathen emperor Severus shall rise up in the judgment with such a generation of christians, and condemn them: For he, by the light of nature, was taught highly to reverence this precept," when he had learned it from the professors of christianity. You might read it upon the walls of his palace: it was engraven there to govern his court in the times of peace; and it is said; he carried it to war with him in the banners of his army, that it might regulate his conduct, upon all military occurrences. What a pity it is that Severus was a heathen! Or rather, what a shame and sorrow it is, that there should be so few of this character in the courts, in the armies, in the markets, the shops, and the families of christians! When will that blessed day come, that shall bring this departed glory back again to the church of Christ? When shall the spirit of faith and charity be poured down from on high, and righteousness come from heaven to dwell among us?

Recollection.—Blessed Saviour, how great is thy goodness, to give us so complete, so plain, so easy, and so divine a rule, to square all our actions in the social life! How happily hast thou comprized Moses and the prophets in two short lines, that is, the command of a supreme love to the Lord our God, and a love to our neighbour like that which we bear to ourselves!

Remember, O my soul, this short and comprehensive lesson; and amongst all thy duties and zeal toward thy God, forget not this rule of conduct toward thy fellow-creatures. I can never complain, It is too high and hard for my understanding to apprehend, or too tiresome and painful for my memory to retain, or too burthensome to carry it about always with me. I am convinced, fully convinced, of the justice of it: It strikes upon my conscience with strong light and evidence, and sometimes I feel the force of it, like an inward motive, awakening me to the practice of all that it enjoins. O that I might ever live under its prevailing influences, and then I might humbly appeal to God, that I have transacted my affairs with men, by the principles of sincere godliness, truth, and justice.

Forgive, O my gracious God, all the wretched instances of my departure from this sacred law of equity. This sacred law will awaken the soul to repentance, as well as direct it to duty; and whatever station of life I am engaged in, whatever rank, character, office, or relation I bear in the world, or in the church of Christ, let me form all my future conduct by this command of my Saviour, let me bring all my past actions to this holy test, and let my conscience repent or rejoice.

O how bright a lustre would be cast on the religion of Jesus, and on all the professors of it, if this rule were always in use! But alas! it lies silent in our Bibles, and we hear it not; or it sleeps in our bosom, and we awake it not, when we have most need of its assistance. We read and we forget even this short rule of righteousness, and thus we practise iniquity daily, and injure our neighbours without remorse. O wretched creatures that we are! How great is our negligence and our guilt, that we do not so much as ask our consciences honestly, how we should treat our fellow-creatures; but we ask our lusts and our passions, we enquire of our ambition and pride, our covetousness, our wrath and revenge, how we should behave towards others.

Reflect, O my soul, how often thou hast turned aside from this blessed rule of thy Saviour, by consulting with the corrupt principles of flesh and blood! How often hast thou neglected this holy precept, to follow the vicious customs of a sinful world, and a degenerate age! A degenerate age indeed, that has forgot the practice of truth and love! Where shall we write this rule in large and golden letters, that the whole city might read it daily? Shall we engrave it on every door, that all who pass by may see it? Shall it stand fixed to every post of the house, that it may direct all our domestic conduct? Shall it meet us at the entrance of every shop, and thus guard our traffic from iniquity, and sanctify all our commerce? Shall we make a phylactery of it, and wear it on the borders of our garments, that we may never put it off, unless we lie down to sleep, and cannot act? But the Spirit of Christ is the best writer of his own golden rule, and the heart of man is the best table to receive and bear this writing. O that the holy Spirit would write the sacred law of justice and love more deeply, more effectually in all our hearts, that the religion of our Saviour might look like itself, all amiable and holy; and that while we give glory to God on high, for his saving grace, we might find peace and truth spreading through all the earth, and good-will multiplied among the children of men. Thus the will of God would be done on earth, as it is in heaven, and the kingdom of our Redeemer come in its expected glory. *Amen.* Even so come Lord Jesus.

HYMN FOR SERMON XXXIII.

THE UNIVERSAL RULE OF EQUITY

I.

BLESSED Redeemer, how divine,
How righteous is this rule of thine,
" Never to deal with others worse,
Than we would have them deal with us!"

II.

This golden lesson short and plain,
Gives not the mind nor memory pain:
And every conscience must approve
This universal law of love.

III.

'Tis written in each mortal breast,
Where all our tenderest wishes rest:
We draw it from our inmost veins,
Where love to self resides and reigns.

IV.

Is reason ever at a loss?
Call in self-love to judge the cause,
Let our own fondest passion shew
How we should treat our neighbours too.

V.

How bless'd would every nation prove,
Thus rul'd by equity and love!
All would be friends without a foe,
And form a paradise below.

VI.

Jesus, forgive us that we keep
Thy sacred law of love asleep;
And take our envy, wrath and pride,
Those savage passions, for our guide.

SERMON XXXIV.

THE ATONEMENT OF CHRIST.

ROM. iii. 25.

WHOM GOD HATH SET FORTH TO BE A PROPITIATION.

IT is one of the chief glories of the gospel, that it discovers a full atonement for sin by the blood of Christ, that it sets before us the reconciliation of sinners to an offended God, by the death of his own Son. One would be ready to wonder, that any of the guilty race of Adam should be unwilling to receive so divine a discovery, or should refuse a blessing so important.

But such unhappy principles have prevailed over the minds of some men, and particularly the socinians in the last age, that they have been content to venture their eternal hopes on the mercy of God, without a dependance on the satisfaction made for sin, by Jesus the Saviour. They imagine Christ the Son of God came into our world chiefly to be a teacher of grace and duty, to be an example of piety and virtue, to plead with God for sinners, and in short, to do little more than any other divine prophet might have been employed in, if the wisdom of God had so appointed it. They suppose he yielded to death, that he might seal his doctrine with his blood, and might set us a glorious pattern of suffering and dying, and then he led the way to our resurrection, by his own rising from the dead.

It is granted indeed, these are some of the designs of the coming of Christ, some of the necessary parts of the blessed gospel: But it seems to me, that this blessed gospel is shamefully curtailed, and deprived of some of its most important designs and honours, if a proper atonement for sin by the blood of Christ be left out of it.

Forgive me, my fellow christians, if I spend a discourse or two on this great article of our common faith. I think it of so high a moment, that I would fain pronounce and publish it aloud in an age that verges towards infidelity; I would glory in the cross of Christ, and endeavour to support this doctrine with all my power. O may none of those who bear the christian name, ever grow weary of it, or run back again to the mere religion of nature, as though we had no gospel!

I shall not spin out my thoughts, or employ yours in a laborious enquiry into the connection of the words, but take them just as they lie, and make this plain sentence the foundation of my discourse.

Doctrine.—God hath set forth his Son, Jesus Christ, to be a propitiation for the sins of men.

When the apostle says, God hath set him forth, Christ is plainly the person intended; and this Greek word προέθετο, set forth, denotes either, 1. That God hath fore-ordained and appointed his Son to become our propitiation by his divine purpose in eternity, which purpose he executed here in time: Or, 2. It intends that God hath set him

forth, that is, proposed and offered him to the world, as an atonement for the sins of those who trust in the merit of his death; for so the following words intimate, God set him forth for a propitiation, through faith in his blood. I am not solicitous which of these senses the reader will choose; either of them perfectly agrees with the design of the apostle.

I would just take a brief notice also, that some interpreters transpose the words of the text a little, and read them thus, *whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation in his blood through faith*, and thus they suppose the apostle, in this very verse, declares that Christ atoned for our sins by his own blood: And if this be the true sense of it, it does but more effectually confirm the design of my doctrine, which is to shew that Christ, by his bloody death, became a sacrifice to God, in order to make satisfaction for the crimes of men. My method of discourse shall be this:

I. To explain more at large the manner in which I conceive Christ to become an atonement or propitiation for our sins.

II. To give some reasons to prove that he is ordained of God, and set forth or offered to the world under this character. And,

III. I shall shew what glorious use is made of this doctrine throughout the whole christian life.

First, Let me explain the manner wherein Christ becomes an atonement or propitiation for sin. And to render this point easy to the lowest understanding, I would draw it out into these propositions:

Proposition I. The great God having made man, appointed to govern him by a wise and righteous law, wherein glory and honour, life and immortality, are the designed rewards for perfect obedience; but tribulation and wrath, pain and death, are the appointed recompence to sinners who violate his law.

This law is in a great measure engraven on the hearts and consciences of all men by nature; at least, the general precepts of it are written in the conscience: And mankind, by the light of nature, has some notion also of these penalties, *viz.* the *indignation and wrath of God on those that do evil.* And such as have enjoyed the benefit of divine revelation, in patriarchal, Jewish, or christian times, have had much clearer discoveries thereof. This might be proved at large from the discourse of St. Paul; *Rom.* ii. 6—16. compared with *Rom.* i. 32. *The heathens who are without the law, have the work of the law written in their hearts*, and they know, or might know, that those who break it *are worthy of death.*

II. All mankind have broken the law of God. *There is none righteous; no, not one;* Rom. iii. 10. By sinning against God, we have lost all pretence to the reward of life, and immortality, and glory; Rom. iii. 23. *All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God:* And we have also subjected ourselves to guilt and punishment; verse 19. *Every mouth is stopped, and all the world becomes guilty before God.* A sentence of wrath and death is *passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;* Rom. v. 12. and the best of saints were by nature *dead in trespasses and sins, and the children of wrath even as others;* Eph. ii. 1, 3.

III. God in his infinite wisdom did not think fit to pardon sinful man, without some compensation for his broken law, some recompence for the dishonour done to his government. He did not see it proper to forgive all our guilt, without some satisfaction for breaking his holy commands. I will not enter into that curious enquiry,

whether God, considered absolutely as a sovereign, could have done it. It is enough for us that he hath, in effect, declared he would not do it, and that probably for such reasons as these:

1. If the great Ruler of the world had pardoned the sins of men without any satisfaction, then his laws might have seemed not worth the vindicating. It might have been questioned, whether his statutes were so wisely contrived and framed, as to deserve a vindication, if he had freely forgiven all rebels that had broken them, without any consideration, without any satisfaction at all. It becomes a wise lawgiver to see that his wisdom in framing his laws be not exposed to dishonour; and therefore his laws must be vindicated, when they are broken.

2. Men would have been tempted to persist in their rebellions, and to repeat their old offences continually, if there had been no vindication of the honour of the law, nor any of the threatenings of it had been executed. Therefore God requires a satisfaction for his broken commands, that his subjects might be kept in due obedience, by an awful fear of his governing justice. And it is on this account, *viz.* to deter and affright men from sinning, and breaking his laws, he hath given them an account in what a severe and terrible manner he dealt with *angels that sinned, he spared them not;* 2 Pet. ii. iv. *but delivered them to chains of darkness until the judgment of the great day;* Jude 6.

3. His forms of government among his creatures, might have appeared as a matter of small importance: His threatenings might have been counted a trifling and useless formality, and mere vain terrors, if he had given laws, and took no care whether they were obeyed or no; and if he let those creatures that broke them come off without any tokens of his displeasure, without any reparation of the honour due to his law and government: Let not sinners deceive themselves with vain hopes, and dress up the great God in their own imaginations, as a being of mere mercy, as an almighty Creator, that keeps no discipline or authority among his creatures; Gal. vi. 7. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked: He that soweth to the flesh shall reap destruction.*

4. God had a mind to make a very illustrious display, both of his justice and of his grace among mankind, which should be the solemn spectacle and the wonder of other worlds besides this, even the world of angels, principalities and powers; and therefore he hath designed his grace and his justice should mutually set forth each other, in his transactions with sinful man: On this account he would not pardon sin, without a satisfaction; but he thought fit to require and demand that sin be punished, and that the honour of the law be repaired to the full, that his justice might shine in full glory: And at the same time, in order to display his rich mercy, he would find out a way to save multitudes of these rebellious creatures.

These, and other reasons, infinitely superior to all our thoughts, might be in the divine mind, why God would not pardon sinners without a satisfaction.

IV. Man, poor sinful man, is not able to make any satisfaction to God for his own sins, by his utmost labours of future obedience: For all that he can do for time to come, is but mere necessary duty, if he had not sinned at all; and therefore this can never make any recompence to the governing justice of God, for his past transgressions.

It is a most strange vain doctrine of the papists, that some persons are such great saints, that they do works of heroic virtue, beyond what they are required to do; and these they call works of supererogation, whereby they can merit some favours at the

hands of God, not only for themselves, but for their neighbours too. Strange doctrine indeed, made up of folly, pride, and absurdity! Our best services are so much due to God, that if any man could practise complete righteousness, and fulfil the law of God constantly through all his life, it would not make amends for one past offence, nor merit any favour of God for a criminal creature.

But, alas! man is so far from being able to fulfil perfect righteousness for time to come, that in this fallen state he can do nothing that is truly good: He broke the law of God in days past, and he goes on to break it daily and hourly. His understanding is grown so dark, his will so perverse, and his affections and appetites so corrupt and vicious, by his departure from God, that he cannot answer the present demands of duty; much less can he bring an offering of righteousness to atone for past iniquities. "We are by nature dead in trespasses and sins."

V. Neither can this guilty, wretched creature, man, make any satisfaction to the broken law of God by his sufferings, any more than by his doings. For the penalty of the law is tribulation and anguish of soul and body, the wrath of God and death: And how far this dreadful sentence reaches, what miseries are implied in it, and how long the execution of it must continue, who can tell? This we know, that God himself, who sees the full evil, and complete desert or demerit of sin, hath, in some places of scripture, threatened eternal punishment to sinners.

And if we may venture to judge concerning the greatness of the guilt and demerit of our offences against God, by the same rules, by which reason teaches us to judge of the guilt and demerit of an offence against our fellow-creatures, we must say, the guilt of sin is infinite; and therefore the punishment due to a sinning creature is everlasting, because he cannot any other way sustain punishment equal to his infinite demerit of sin. Among men the crime is always aggravated, in proportion to the person against whom it is committed: Therefore any offence against a father, or a king, has much more guilt in it, and is more severely punished, than the same offence committed against an inferior, or an equal. An attempt upon the life of a neighbour, is punished with imprisonment or a fine: But an attempt made on the life of a king, deserves death.

Now the great God our Creator, being a king of infinite glory and majesty, infinitely superior to his creature man, every offence against this God has a sort of infinity in it:* And God may demand satisfaction equal to the offence, that is infinite, which poor sinful man can never pay, so as to outlive the payment. On this account, he is exposed to the execution of the sentence of God for ever: His punishment has no end. Perhaps this will be counted an old-fashioned argument, and not so generally received in our day, as it was in the days of our fathers: Therefore I have examined it afresh with all the skill I have, and having surveyed the objections which are raised against it, I think they are not hard to be answered: And, after all, so far as I can judge in a way of reasoning upon what scripture has revealed, this argument seems to have weight and strength in it still.

Were it not for the supposition of the infinite guilt and demerit of sin, I do not so

* Every circumstance that aggravates any crime, must aggravate it in a degree proportionable to that circumstance: otherwise we could never determine what is the degree of this aggravation, nor adjust the punishment in proportion to it. On this account, if the crime be committed against God, an infinite being, the guilt must be infinitely aggravated.

plainly see the justice or equity of God in preparing everlasting chains of darkness, and eternal fire, for the devil and his angels, as a proper punishment due to their first act of rebellion against him, and because they *kept not their own first estate;** Jude 6. Nor indeed do I see such evident reason, why sinners among men should be threatened with eternal punishments, and punished with everlasting destruction, as a legal penalty due to past sins; *Matt.* xxv. 46. and 2 *Thess.* i. 9. which sins were done perhaps in a few days or hours, unless upon a supposition that all offences committed against the infinite majesty of God, have a sort of infinite demerit in them.

I beg leave to add this one thought more, and that is, if sin has not a sort of infinite demerit in it, I cannot see why man himself, by some years of penal sufferings, might not make full atonement for his own sins: But the language and current of scripture seems to represent sinful man as for ever lost to all hope in himself, and then the necessity of a Mediator appears with evidence and glory.

VI. Though man be incapable to satisfy for his own violation of the law, either by his obedience or his punishment, and so to restore himself to the favour of God, yet God would not suffer all mankind to perish. Therefore out of his abundant mercy, he appointed his own Son to undertake this work. His own, his only begotten Son, who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and who lay in the bosom of the Father before all worlds; his Son who was one with the Father, by a communion of the godhead, and who is himself, on this account, called God over all, blessed for ever; this well-beloved Son of God is ordained and appointed to be the great Reconciler between God and man.

VII. Because God intended to make a full display of the terrors of his justice, and his divine resentment for the violation of his law, therefore he appointed his own Son to satisfy for the breach of it, by becoming a proper sacrifice of expiation or atonement: Now, both among Jews and heathens, the original notion and design of an expiatory sacrifice is, when some other creature or person is put in the room or place of the transgressor, and the punishment or pain due to the transgressor is transferred to that other person or creature. Therefore beasts were slain for the offences of men, who were supposed to deserve death. And when any person became a surety for a city or nation that was defiled with sin among the heathens, that person was substituted in their room, and so devoted to death. So the Son of God became a surety for sinful men: It pleased the Father to make him their sacrifice, and substituted him in their stead: God ordained that he should put himself into their circumstances, as far as was possible, with a due condescendency to his superior character, and that he should sustain, as near as possible, the very same pains and penalties which sinful man had incurred. Since tribulation and anguish of soul and body, a sense of the wrath of God, and death, were the appointed penalties of the sin of man; therefore he determined that his own Son should pass through all these: And since the law curses all that continue not in all the commands of it, therefore Christ *was made a curse for us,*

* I grant, 1. that their continual persistence and obstinacy in sinful practices, may naturally render them continually miserable; and, 2. this continued obstinacy may also, in a legal sense, merit continual new punishment. And perhaps, on these two reasons, the actual eternity of hell may be justly supported. But unless we suppose every wilful rebellion against the infinite Majesty of God, to have also a sort of infinite evil in it, I do not see that everlasting chains, and eternal fire, are a proper deserved punishment, legally due to their first rebellion, that is, to one act of sin.

that he might redeem us from the curse of the law; Gal. iii. 10, 13. Hereby he gave a most awful and sensible demonstration to this visible world of mankind, and perhaps, much more to the invisible world of angels and devils, how dreadful a thing it is to break the law of a God, what infinite evil is contained in sin, and at what a terrible rate it must be expiated and atoned for.

VIII. The Son of God being immortal, could not sustain all these penalties of the law which man had broken, without taking the mortal nature of man upon him, without assuming flesh and blood: Thus his incarnation was necessary, that he might be a more proper surety, substitute, and representative of man who had sinned; and that he might be capable of suffering pain, and anguish, and death itself, in the room and stead of sinful men. It was because the *children who were* given to Christ, *Heb.* ii. 13, 14. because these *children were partakers of flesh and blood, therefore he himself also took part of the same, that through death he might redeem them,* that by his own dying he might make atonement for their sins; Heb. x. 5. *Sacrifice and offering* of beasts, thou wouldest not accept as equivalent for the sins of men: *But a body hast thou prepared me,* saith our Lord, *that men might be redeemed by the offering of the body of Christ, once for all;* verse 10.

It was in the prospect of the Son of God becoming man, by taking flesh and blood upon him, that God spake thus to David; Psalm lxxxix. 19. *I have exalted one chosen out of the people;* that is, out of mankind: *I have laid help upon one that is mighty: And when he was found in fashion as a man,* Phil. ii. 10. God laid on him the iniquities of us all by imputation; *Isaiah* liii. 5, 6. even as the sins, and iniquities, and trespasses of the children of Israel were laid on the head of the goat of old, by the confession and hand of Aaron; *Lev.* xvi. 21.

When the guilt was thus transferred to him, as far as it was possible for the Son of God to sustain it, he then became liable to punishment; and indeed that seems to me to be the truest and justest idea of transferred or imputed guilt, *viz.* when a surety is accepted to suffer in the room of the offender, then the pain or penalty is due to him by consent: And as this is the true original and foundation of expiatory sacrifices, as I have shewn before, so this seems to be the foundation of that particular manner, wherein scripture teaches us this doctrine: *He that knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;* 2 Cor. v. 21. *His own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree;* 1 Pet. ii. 24. *The chastisement or punishment of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed;* Isaiah liii. 5. And in many other places of scripture we read the same sort of language. This doctrine is supported with great strength, by the most learned and pious Dr. Owen, in his short treatise of the satisfaction of Christ.

Upon this account, though God the Father was never truly angry with his beloved Son, yet it *pleased the Father to bruise him,* when he stood in the room of guilty creatures. The Father himself *put him to grief, and made his soul an offering for sin;* Isaiah liii. 10. Then the Son of God began to be sore amazed, and very heavy at the approaching deluge of this sorrow; *Mark* xiv. 33. The Father forsook him for a season, withdrew his comfortable influences, and gave him some such exquisite sight and sense of that indignation and wrath that was due to sin, as filled his holy soul with anguish, *his soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death;* Matt. xxvi. 38. while his body sweat

drops of blood in the garden: And at last he poured out his soul to death, and *gave his life a ransom for many; he reconciled us to God by the blood of his cross;* Col. i. 20.

Though we allow the human nature of Christ to be the highest, the noblest, and best of creatures, and in that sense might be worth ten thousand of us, yet if sin has an infinite evil in it, then no mere creature, by all his sufferings, could make complete and equal satisfaction for sin: But when the Son of God, who is one with the Father, takes flesh and blood upon him, and becomes God manifest in the flesh, here God and man are united in one complex person, and hereby we enjoy an all-sufficient Saviour, a Reconciler beyond all exception, a sacrifice of atonement, equal to the guilt of our transgressions. And so far as I can judge, it is on this account one apostle says, Acts xx. 28. *God redeemed the church with his own blood;* and another asserts, *Hereby perceive we the love of God, that he laid down his life for us;* 1 John iii. 16.

And I do not yet see sufficient reason why that expression of St. Paul, *Heb.* ix. 14. may not be referred to the same sense. *How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience,* &c. If the eternal Spirit signify the divine nature or godhead, which dwelt bodily in the man Jesus, then the dignity of his complete person is made the foundation of the value of his blood. This dignity of the godhead, which was personally united to the man who suffered, spreads an infinite value over his sufferings and merit: And this renders them equal to that infinite guilt and demerit of sin, which would have extended the punishment of man to everlasting ages. The infinite dignity of the person suffering, answers to the infinite dignity of the person offended, and so takes away the necessity of the everlasting duration of it.

Thus our blessed Mediator, the man Jesus Christ, *in whom dwells all the fulness of the godhead bodily,* fulfilled the righteous demands of the law, and suffered the penalties due to our sins. He magnified his Father's law in this manner, and made it honourable, beyond what all the sons of Adam could do by their utmost sufferings. Thus the justice of God shines most gloriously in the sufferings of his Son Jesus Christ: Thus the great God vindicated his own character, as a wise and righteous lawgiver, before the face of men and angels, in the anguish and death of his own Son: He gave a most awful and formidable assurance, that he was not a God to be trifled with, and that the sin of his creatures should not go unpunished. He that spared not his own Son, when he stood in the room of sinners, will never spare guilty rebels, that persist in their rebellions. Thus far we see how Christ became a sacrifice of atonement.

IX. God, the great Ruler of the world, having received such ample satisfaction for sin, by the sufferings of his own Son, can honourably forgive his creature man, who was the transgressor. There is so glorious a reparation made to the honour of his righteous and broken law, that he can pardon sinners without dishonour to himself, and his government. He can glorify his justice and his mercy at once, in a most exuberant and illustrious manner, since his own Son has become a priest of atonement, and offered up himself as a sacrifice, to make *propitiation for sin: He can declare his righteousness, though he passes by a thousand offences that are past, and can shew himself just to his own law and government, at the same time that he forgives millions of sins; and is a justifier of him who believeth in Jesus;* Rom. iii. 25, 26.

X. I might add in the last place, since my text intimates it, that as the great God, in his eternal counsels, appointed his Son Jesus Christ to undertake this difficult and

glorious work, for the salvation of sinful men, so in the days of the gospel he has, in the most plain and explicit manner, offered this reconciliation to sinners who return to God by the mediation of Jesus Christ: He has proposed peace to those who are sincerely desirous to be reconciled to God, and to have all enmity done away on both sides; to those who trust in the virtue of the blood of Christ, as the foundation of this divine peace between God and them, or in the language of my text, to those who have faith in his blood.

But let it be remembered, that this desire to be reconciled, must proceed from a painful sense of sin, that makes a separation between God and the soul: This implies sincere repentance in the nature of it. It must be such a faith in Jesus and his sacrifice, as works powerfully by holy love, and produces all the good fruits of religion in the heart and life. All faith is useless to attain peace with God, unless it carries in it the springs and seeds of love and holiness. Though we are justified by faith, yet it must not be a mere bold presumption, but a living faith, which will appear in its fruits.

Thus I have endeavoured to perform the first thing I proposed, and that was to shew in what manner I conceive of the Son of God becoming an atonement for the sins of men. Far be it from me, to imagine that every one must believe these things just after the same order, and in the same manner in which I have learned to conceive of them: Several learned and pious men have explained the manner of this atonement in another way: But they agree in the doctrine of a proper satisfaction for sin. Different persons behold the representation of these great and important things of christianity in different lights: And though, according to my measure of knowledge in the scripture, this manner of conception of the atonement of Christ seems most agreeable to the word of God, yet, I am fully persuaded, God has never made salvation to depend upon a nice exactness of sentiment about the mere order of ranging these divine discoveries, or about the precise logical relations of the sufferings of Christ, to our sins, or to our pardon. Whosoever sincerely confesses and repents of sin, and trusts in the all-sufficient atonement and sacrifice of Christ, to remove the guilt of it, has abundant assurance from scripture, that the blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse him from all sin, and that the Son of God has been, and will be his High-priest, to reconcile him to God the Father.

The Recollection.—It becomes me now to reflect on what I have heard this day. The atonement of Christ is one of the chief glories, and most surprising wonders of my religion: It is the ground of my hope, it is the very life of my soul. Here I have been learning the several transactions of the great God, the Creator and Ruler of the world, with all the children of men from the beginning of their creation. The light of nature informs me in an imperfect manner, and the scripture with much brighter evidence assures me, that I was made under the law, and not born to live at random, according to the wild dictates of appetite and passion. I am informed also, my Creator has guarded the honour of his law with indignation and wrath, with pain of the flesh, and anguish of the mind, and death itself, as the penalties to be inflicted on those that break it. A law divinely wise and righteous, and a sanction of solemn and divine terror!

But, alas! I am one of the sinful guilty race of man. My very nature is corrupt, my powers of action are unholy, and I have broken the law of my God in a thousand instances. My conscience condemns me, my mouth is stopped, I am guilty before God. I lie under the sentence of his condemning law by nature, and am by nature a child of disobedience, and a child of wrath. It is a glorious instance of divine mercy and for-

bearance, that he has not executed the severities of his law upon me long ago: It is rich mercy and adorable patience that my flesh and spirit have not been filled with all these terrors, that I am not made as wretched as I have been rebellious.

Nor can I expect, that the great and terrible God, who sent his indignation upon angels when they sinned, turned them out of heaven, and chained them in darkness, should forgive all my infinite offences, without some reparation made for the honour of his broken law. He is a great God indeed, his majesty is tremendous, and every thing that belongs to him must have its due of honour.

If I labour with all my powers to make him some recompence for my past iniquities by new obedience, I find it is impossible. The best of my righteousnesses are all defective: My holiest services want some forgiveness, as well as my wilful sins. Nor can I suffer the punishment due to my iniquities, without being for ever miserable. All the doors of hope are shut against me, nor by the utmost effort and labour of my own powers, can I find a way to escape: If I am left to myself in this state, I must despair and perish. But blessed, for ever blessed be the mercy of my God, that he has sent his own Son to take flesh and blood upon him. He has sent him in the likeness of sinful flesh to become a sacrifice for sin, to sustain the sorrows which I could never sustain, and to provide a laver of his own blood to cleanse us from all sins. Lord, I humbly approach this sacred laver, to wash away the defilements of my soul.

Christ is become a sacrifice to divine justice, in the room and stead of men. And he is also our great High-priest: For he offered himself up to the strokes of justice, and the penal demands of the law of God, and thereby he hath shewn himself to be a priest of reconciliation. How adorable is this contrivance! How amazing is this love! How should sinners be surprised with a sense of this abounding grace! Here I behold the Son of God stooping down from the height of his glory, to become a mortal man, surrounded with flesh and sorrows: I behold the first favourite of heaven, the first beloved Son leaving the bosom of his Father, and the fulness of celestial joys, that he might unite himself to our feeble nature, and taste the anguish and the smart that our rebellions had deserved. I behold him forsaken of his Father, and lying under the weight and terror of some unknown discoveries and impressions of that divine indignation and wrath that was due to sinners; unknown impressions indeed, that struck the Son of God with amazement, and made his soul exceeding sorrowful even to death!

And was all this for my sins, O my Saviour! Didst thou sustain these heavy sufferings from the hand of God, that such a rebel as I might be reconciled? Yes, all this for my sins, if I am found a sincere believer on the Son of God.

Enquire now, O my soul, dost thou believe in Christ? Hast thou seen thy heavy guilt, and thy danger of eternal death? Hast thou been weary and heavy laden with a sense of thy past iniquities? Hast thou been pained at heart under the present power of in-dwelling sin? And hast thou fled for refuge to the hope set before thee in the gospel? Hast thou joyfully received Jesus the Saviour by faith in his blood? by a living and active faith? Hast thou committed thyself to him, to be delivered from the reign of sin, as well as from the condemnation of it? Then mayest thou join with the blessed apostle, and speak in the language of faith, *He loved me, and gave himself for me;* Gal. ii. 20.

Let me meditate again the sorrows and agonies of my dear, my adored Redeemer.

Infinite agonies and sorrows, beyond all the powers of language! Is my heart made of stone, that it can hear such a history, and not melt within me; have I no tender part within me to bleed at the rehearsal of such anguish, and such love? Blessed Jesus, smite the rock of my heart, and let it pour out new streams of repentance and affectionate gratitude! I was dead, and the Son of God gave himself up to death, in order to raise me to life again. I was a traitor and an enemy, and he hath sustained the arrows of the Almighty to reconcile me to his Father, and turn away his infinite indignation. My great High-priest has offered up himself a bloody sacrifice for me, that my guilt might be forgiven, and cancelled for ever.

Think, O my soul, study, contrive, speak, what wilt thou render to the Lord for such astonishing condescension, and such unexampled grace? How wilt thou shew thy inestimable value of his atonement? What does he require of thee, but to keep those garments clean, which he has washed in so rich a fountain as his own blood? And shall I ever wilfully indulge the practice of sin again, and return to my old defilements? Shall I ever consent to break the law of my God? Have I not seen the dreadful nature and dismal effects of it, in the agonies and death of my dearest Lord? What shall I do that I may never sin more? Lord, I cannot preserve myself from the fatal infection, while I dwell in a world where sin reigns all around me, in a world that lies in wickedness; and while I am so nearly allied to flesh and blood, where folly, vice, and sin run through every vein to my heart. Jesus, I commit myself afresh to thy care, thou wilt save the soul that thou hast purchased at so dear a rate; thou wilt accept and save a returning penitent. Here I devote my life, my self, my flesh and spirit, and all my powers to thy obedience, and the purposes of thy glory for ever and ever: My soul looks up to thee with an eye of humble confidence, and my faith and hope rest on thy everlasting love. *Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMON XXXIV.

THE ATONEMENT OF CHRIST.

I.

HOW is our nature spoil'd by sin!
Yet nature ne'er hath found
The way to make the conscience clean,
Or heal the painful wound.

II.

In vain we seek for peace with God,
By methods of our own:
Jesus, there's nothing but thy blood
Can bring us near the throne.

III.

The threat'nings of the broken law
Impress our souls with dread:
If God his sword of vengeance draw,
It strikes our spirits dead.

IV.

But thy illustrious sacrifice
Hath answer'd these demands:
And peace and pardon from the skies
Come down by Jesus' hands.

V.

Here all the ancient types agree,
The altar and the lamb:
And prophets in their vision see
Salvation through his name.

VI.

'Tis by thy death we live, O Lord;
'Tis on thy cross we rest:
For ever be thy love ador'd,
Thy name for ever blest.

SERMON XXXV.

THE ATONEMENT OF CHRIST.

ROM. iii. 25.

WHOM GOD HATH SET FORTH TO BE A PROPITIATION.

HAVING explained the manner in which Christ is a propitiation for sin; I come in the second place to propose some reasons to evince the truth of this doctrine, namely, That God hath ordained his Son Jesus to be our propitiation or sacrifice of atonement. And here I shall proceed by degrees, from some apparent probabilities, to more evident and convincing proofs.

I. The first reason I shall give for it is this, that an atonement for sin, and an effectual method to answer the demands of an offended God, is the first great blessing which guilty mankind stood in need of: but the powers of nature could never procure it, nor could the light of reason ever shew them how to obtain it: Now it is the design of the gospel of Christ to supply the wants and deficiencies of guilty nature, that is both impotent and blind; it is to introduce an effectual reconciliation between God and sinners; it is to point out an atonement to them, answerable to their guilt, which they wanted, and to discover a solid foundation for peace. This is done in the death of Christ.

A few easy reflections of natural conscience, will acquaint all the thinking part of men that they are sinners, that they have offended the great and glorious God who made them: And those that have read the histories of mankind, and have surveyed distant nations and past ages, have found this to be almost the universal enquiry of men, "What shall we do to pacify the anger of that God, against whom we have sinned?" The heathen world had an awful notion of the vengeance of heaven. Hence arose endless forms of superstition: How many long and costly ceremonies, what painful and bloody rites of worship have been invented and practised by men, to make some compensation for their crimes! All the craft and contrivance of their priests, could never have prevailed with the bulk of mankind, to take such yokes of bondage upon them, if there had not been something in natural conscience, which wanted an atonement and peace to be made with heaven, from a sense of their own guilt.

The prophet Micah introduces this general language of an awakened conscience, *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, or bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings?—Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?* Micah. vi. 6, 7. Alas! All these are vain and fruitless proposals: But the gospel makes the enquiring conscience easy, when it proposes the blood of the Son of God, appointed by the Father as a satisfactory offering for

the sins of men: This is what the guilty world wanted, but could never find out. This the gospel hath revealed and set in an open light.

And indeed, if the great God who is offended, did ever send down a Peace-maker to reconcile heaven and earth, it is very reasonable to suppose that he should answer the universal cry of nature distressed with guilt; and that he should furnish sinful creatures with such an atonement for sin, and such a solid foundation for their acceptance with himself, as might fully satisfy their reason and their awakened consciences. And this is no where to be found in so evident and complete a manner, as in the death of Christ.

II. The very first discoveries of grace, which were made to man after his fall, implied in them something of an atonement for sin, and pointed to the propitiation which Christ has now made; *Gen.* iii. 15, &c. The first appearance of grace was the promise given, that the *seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent*, that is, he should abolish the guilt, mischief, and misery that sin and the tempter had introduced: But in order to do this, the woman's seed must have his heel bruised, must sustain some personal sufferings.

Immediately after this, sacrifices of beasts were instituted * as a type and prefiguration of some future glorious sacrifice and atonement that should be made to God for the sins of men. Now it is the very notion of an expiatory sacrifice, as I have shewn before, that some creature is provided to stand in the room of the original transgressor, and to bear his guilt and suffer punishment in his stead, that thereby the transgressor having his guilt taken away, may be delivered and saved. And when Adam was ordered to put a beast to death which had not sinned, in order to worship or honour God by it, and when he found that he himself who had sinned, was not put to death, it was not hard for him to understand that the beast was put to death in his room and stead: And it is not unlikely that God told him so.

Let us consider further, that it is exceeding probable, when the *Lord God made coats of skins for Adam and his wife;* Gen. iii. 21. these were the skins of the beasts that had been put to death in sacrifice: And thus God made it appear to them, that their nakedness was covered, and the shame of their guilt removed, by a blessing derived from the beasts that were slain. The skins of the sacrifices being put upon their bodies, might abate something of their former fear, and encourage them to appear before God, who were terrified a little before, at the thoughts of their guilt and nakedness. Their deserved death was transferred to the sacrificed animal; and the skin of the animal sacrificed, was transferred to them as a covering for their guilt and shame. These are no obscure intimations of benefit and safety to be derived to sinners, from some atonement to be made for sin.

If we will hearken to St. Paul, he explains the first promise, when he says, Heb. ii. 14. that *Christ took flesh and blood upon him, that he might, by his own death destroy*

* Though we have no express revelation in scripture, that sacrifices were now instituted, yet there is abundant reason to believe it: For, 1. Abel offered bloody sacrifices. Now we can hardly suppose that Adam or Abel would ever invent such a strange ceremony to please God with it: Nor could reason ever dictate to them, that God, their Creator, would be pleased with such a bloody practice, as cutting his living creatures to pieces, and then burning them with fire. Nor would God, who is so jealous of his prerogative in matters of worship, ever have shewn his acceptance of these rites, if he himself had not appointed them. 2. Though we do not read that Adam offered sacrifice, yet it is plain he was not permitted to eat flesh; and therefore it is more probable, that when he killed beasts, it was for sacrifices; And God taught him to make cloathing for himself out of their skins. This was immediately after the fall.

the devil, who had the power of death, or had introduced it into the world. Here the Saviour's heel was bruised, and the head of the serpent broken; nor can it be well supposed, how the death of Christ should destroy the works of the devil, but by making an atonement for the sins of men; for which sins divine justice had put them under his power or tyranny.

I will not presume to say, that Adam himself could read so much gospel as this in those first words of promise; or that he knew in so explicit and distinct a manner, the designs and ends of a sacrifice, when God taught him the practice: Yet it is very probable, that the great God condescended to give a much farther explication both of the first words of comfort concerning the seed of the woman, and of his own appointment of sacrifices, and of the reason of them, than Moses has written, or than we who live at this distance of time can ever certainly know.

III. Suppose what I have yet offered, be too obscure a foundation for this doctrine, yet let us consider that the following train of ceremonies, which were appointed by God in the Jewish church, when he separated a peculiar people to himself, are plain significations of such an atonement for sin as our Lord Jesus has made, and they confirm the meaning of the first institution of sacrifices.

I will grant indeed, that many of the ceremonies of the Jewish church, had also some other intendments, *viz.* To distinguish the nation of Israel from the gentile world, and to keep them in subjection to God, who was their political head or king, as well as their God, to preserve them as a nation in his favour, and restore them when they had offended him as their governor and king: But a few considerations will give us sufficient evidence, that these are mere subordinate designs of God in the Jewish law, and especially in his institution of the ceremonies of atonement and priesthood.

First Consideration.—The Jewish ceremonies are often represented as types or figures of gospel-blessings by the apostle Paul; 2 *Cor.* iii. *Gal.* vi. *Col.* ii. *Heb.* vii, viii, ix, x. The levitical ceremonial rites were but the letter, of which the gospel of Christ is the spirit or meaning: Those were but as a veil to cover the good things of the gospel; they were but weak and poor rudiments or elements of learning, to lead us into the knowledge of gospel-blessings. "The law was our school-master to bring us to Christ. They were but a shadow of things to come, whose substance or body is Christ: They served but to the example and shadow of heavenly things; that is, the things of the gospel: They were a figure for the time present; a shadow of those good things to come, which the Holy Ghost signified by them." The great end of these Jewish ceremonial appointments, in the sense of this inspired writer, was, that they should stand but as types and figures of things under the gospel; as emblems of the various offices of the Messiah that was to come, and eminently of his priesthood and propitiation. Now the substance is superior to the shadow.

Second Consideration.—This is more evident still, if we consider that many of the defilements which were to be removed by these sacrifices and purifications, were of an external and corporeal nature, which, considered in themselves, were generally innocent as to moral guilt, and did not want such sort of bloody purgations.* Thence we may

* It may be worthy our notice here, that blood is no very proper liquid for purification of any defilements, unless it be, as it represents death to be an atonement for the guilt of sin, which is a moral defilement of the soul. And yet, Heb. ix. 22. *Almost all things under the law are purged by blood:* One would think water should be a much better cleanser: But we find this purging or cleansing signifies atonement for sin, when the very next words give us

reasonably infer, that these external defilements of the body, did typify and represent the moral and sinful pollutions of the soul; and consequently, that the external and corporeal forms of atonement and purgation, were chiefly designed as types and figures of the blood of Christ, which was a real propitiation for the sins of the soul.

Third Consideration.—The most exact and happy resemblance and conformity, between the method of atonement by the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ, and the appointed rites of the levitical priesthood and atonement, very naturally leads us to suppose, that one was designed to figure out and foretel the other; especially since the scripture gives us such frequent hints of it. The great God, to whom all his own works are known from the beginning of the world, had the sacrifice and priesthood of his Son Jesus ever in his eye, when he ordained the Jewish forms of atonement. He kept in view the blood of Christ, which was to be shed for our sins, when he appointed the shedding of the blood of bulls and goats. He kept in view Jesus the High-priest, who was hereafter to enter into heaven in the virtue of his own blood, when he appointed Aaron to go into the holy place, the figure of the true, with the blood of the yearly expiation. He kept in view the merit of Christ's death, which was to be applied to our souls and consciences by faith, when he appointed the people to be sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifices: And therefore the blood of Christ is called the blood of sprinkling; *Heb.* xii. 24. And when he ordained the morning and evening lamb for a continual burnt-offering, he pointed, though afar off, to the Messiah, the Lamb of God, that must take away the sins of men.

These resemblances might be shewn in a multitude of other instances; but I cannot omit this one, *viz.* As the killing of the beast was designed to hold forth the violent and bloody death of Christ, the great sacrifice; so the burning of the flesh and entrails on the altar by that divine fire, which was always kept alive there, and which was kindled at first from heaven, seems plainly intended to foretel those sacred divine impressions of the indignation of God due to sinners, which were to be made upon the holy soul of Christ himself, *when it pleased the Father to bruise him, and put him to grief:* For the indignation of God is often represented by fire.

We must not imagine therefore, that these levitical ordinances were first in the design of God, as proper statutes for the Jewish nation, and then that the Son of God came into the world, and passed through such special scenes of life, death, and resurrection, merely in order to copy out these Jewish ordinances: But we must conceive the Son of God, first designed as our great Atonement and High-priest on earth, and in heaven: And in the view and foresight hereof all those levitical ordinances were given to the Jews as figures and emblems, to give early notice before-hand, of the blessings of the great Messiah. Surely the atonement of the Messiah, which was to be a real relief for the guilt of all nations, was of much more importance, and held a higher rank in the ideas and designs of God, than the mere ceremonies given to a single nation.

If it should be objected still, that those Jewish rites have been plainly proved by some

the reason why blood is appointed, *viz.* because pardon or remission is the thing sought; *for without shedding of blood is no remission.*

It is plain therefore, that to a guilty and defiled soul or conscience, every thing is defiled; as *Tit.* i. 15. But when both the people and their sacred utensils were sprinkled with blood, it denotes, that all things are sanctified and pure, to those whose souls partake of the atonement of Christ, and whose sins are remitted through his bloody death.

learned men to be political services done to God as their King and Governor, for he dwelt in Jerusalem as their king, and kept his court among them in the tabernacle and the temple. I answer:

1. This may very well be granted as an inferior and subordinate design of God: For the consideration of God, as the civil or political ruler of the Jewish nation, is much inferior to the consideration of him as the Creator, and the Lord of the souls and consciences, not only of the nation of Israel, but of all mankind, who were to derive benefit from the sacrifice of Christ. The supreme intent and meaning of any constitution, does by no means destroy those which are subordinate. It may be allowed also:

2. That the sacrifices duly offered, did make a real and proper atonement for the political guilt of the Israelites in the sight of God, considered as their peculiar king, and continued them in his political favour, or restored them to it, after some breach of the Jewish laws. This seems to be the sense of the apostle, *Heb.* ix. 13. "The blood of bulls and goats sanctifies to the purifying of the flesh," as well as of many expressions in the books of Moses. And yet these same sacrifices might make a typical atonement for their moral guilt in the sight of God, considered as their God, that is, as the Lord of conscience, and the God of the souls of men: And all this with a direct aspect upon the sacrifice of Christ, the great and real atonement that was to come: And indeed, the next words; *Heb.* ix. 14. intimate so much, "How much more shall the blood of Christ purge your consciences from dead works?" that is, from works of sin which deserve death in the sight or judgment of God, considered as the supreme Lord of souls and consciences.

These sacrifices, I say, could make but a typical atonement for moral guilt in the sight of God, considered as their God; for it is sufficiently evident to any thinking mind, that it *was not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin*, as committed against a God; *Heb.* x. 4. And therefore the Jews themselves, when they had offered their chief sacrifice of yearly expiation, had not so clear, so full, and so satisfactory a peace in their consciences, as the gospel of Christ bestows on christians; The apostle says, verse 1, 2. *the comers thereunto were not made perfect;* for if they had, *the worshippers once purged, would have no more conscience of sin*, or sense of guilt. *Wherefore, when Christ came into the world, he saith, sacrifice and offering*, that is, *of bulls and goats, thou wouldest not, for they were not sufficient, but a body hast thou prepared me;* and for what end this was done, the following verses tell us, that sinners might be purified from the guilty defilements of sin, *through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all;* verse 10.

Thus the blessed God, who designed in due time to make his own Son an atonement for sinners, did early give some emblematical notices of this divine atonement to those few who were taught to understand them: And in this manner he kept alive in the world the hope of some such glorious future transaction, which should be the ground-work of peace between God and men, by the appointed death and sacrifice of beasts throughout all ages, ever since he made the first promise, and gave the first hope of grace to fallen man.

And indeed, all the souls that were pardoned, and all the sins that were remitted under the several ancient dispensations of Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Moses, must be referred to the virtue of this great sacrifice of the Son of God, though all who were pardoned might not distinctly know the ground of it. *Him hath God set forth to be a propitiation for the remission of sins that are past* in far distant ages, as well as for sins

that are yet to come; *Rom.* iii. 25. His sacrifice has a most extensive efficacy, it reaches through all nations, and all ages, from the beginning of the world to the end of it. It was this sacrifice of Christ, that gave virtue to all other institutions and rights of atonement that were appointed by God himself. In themselves they were weak and insufficient, but they were made powerful through the blood of Christ, to speak pardon and peace in some measure, to the guilty conscience, though since Christ is come, we hear the joyful sound of peace and pardon much more distinctly.

IV. Nor was this doctrine manifested only in the ancient forms of worship and sacrifice which God had ordained, but some of the noblest of the following prophecies confirm and explain the first promise, and shew that Christ was to die as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of men. I will mention only the words of those two great men, Isaiah and Daniel. By Daniel we are told, that the "Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself, and the design of this is, to finish transgression, to make an end of sin, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness;" *Dan.* ix. 24, 26. Isaiah speaks the same thing more largely, in his liii. chapter, verses 5, 6, 10, 11. *Christ was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed: We like sheep have gone astray, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.—It pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief, and to make his soul an offering for sin.—By the knowledge of him shall he justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities.* How exceeding plain and strong is this language to support my doctrine, and how exceeding hard to construe it to any other sense!

It may not be amiss to subjoin the witness of John the Baptist, who was more than a prophet, and the very fore-runner of the Messiah; John i. 26. *Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world.* Now a lamb takes away sin in no other way than by dying as a sacrifice. Thus our blessed Redeemer who, once in the end of the world, appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, as a great High-priest, was, as it were, ushered into his office by a long train of types and prophecies: All these went before him, that when his great sacrifice was offered, it might not seem a strange thing, but might be more easily received by all the world, who stood in so much need of him, and to whom the tradition of sacrifices had been conveyed from Noah; and especially by the Jews, who had so much notice of him before, by more express revelations beyond what the heathens could learn by their broken traditions of sacrifice.

V. Our Saviour himself, among the rest of his ministrations as a prophet, taught us the doctrine of atonement for sin by his death, and that in these three ways:

1. He did speak of it, though but sparingly, in plain and express language to his own disciples in private. *Matt.* xx. 28. *The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many:* And this he spoke a little after he had foretold his sufferings, his crucifixion, his death, and his rising again the third day.

2. He preached this doctrine publicly to the multitude in parables and figures of speech; *John* vi. 51. *The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you:* Which can signify nothing but his dying as a propitiation for sin, that we might live by our feeding upon his sacrifice, or partaking the benefit of it. *John* xii. 24. *The hour is come that the Son of man must be glorified. Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit;* verse 32.

If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me: This he said, signifying what death he should die. His being lifted up on the cross should draw many souls to him as their way to the favour of God. Once he spoke it in a little plainer language, in public; *John* x. 11. where he represents himself as the *good Shepherd, who lays down his life for his sheep.*

3. He taught the same doctrine both in types or emblems, and in plain language, just before he died, at the institution of the holy supper; Luke xxii. 19. *He took bread—and brake it,* saying, *This is my body which is given for you.* And of the cup he said, *This cup is the New Testament in my blood which is shed for you;* or as St. Matthew expresses it, *This is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for many, for the remission of sins.* These things put together, make it evident that Christ himself taught this doctrine.

Objection. But it will be said, How can we suppose that this doctrine of atonement by the death of Christ, should be so considerable a part of the gospel, if our blessed Redeemer, the great Prophet of his church, spoke so seldom of it in public, and that in so obscure a manner?

Answer 1. This doctrine of atonement for sin by his death, and the acceptance of it with God the Father, could not be so well preached in public till he died, and rose again; for his death was the foundation of this atonement; his resurrection and his ascension to heaven were the proofs of its being accepted of God. Now it was divinely wise and proper for our Lord not to preach such doctrines too freely in public to the multitude, till these events should appear in the world. If he had spoken all these things concerning himself, it would have probably amazed and confounded the common people, and raised their rage or their ridicule; so ignorant and so full of prejudice as they were in that day.

Answer 2. If Christ had publicly and plainly preached up the atonement of his death, he must thereby have foretold openly that he must die as a sacrifice; and this might have had very ill effects on the malicious Jews, either, 1. To provoke them to kill him before his hour was come, and pretend that they only obeyed his own prophecy and commission when they put him to death: Or, 2. They might lay hold on him, and keep him prisoner without killing him, to endeavour to falsify his prophecies of his death, and thus attempt to make void his doctrine of atonement.

It is true, God, by his immediate influence on the wills of men, could have prevented these effects: But it is not the manner of God's conduct in providence to answer and accomplish his own predictions by such immediate, divine, and over-ruling restraints upon the wills of men, if it may be done otherwise. And therefore indeed, the prophecies, and especially such as are accomplished in the same age in which they are spoken, are usually given forth in metaphors and parables, that men may not so clearly and perfectly understand them, and that God, in his moral government of the world, may not be constrained to go out of his common and ordinary methods, in order to bring these prophecies to pass.

Answer 3. It is evident, from many expressions in the evangelists, that it was not the design of Christ, in his own life time, to publish the grace and glory of the gospel, in so clear, so distinct, and so complete a manner, as he designed to have it published by his apostles after he was gone to heaven. The design of his own public ministry was

rather to prepare the way for the setting up of his own kingdom in the world, than to set it up in the full glory of it in his own person. According to this view of things, his preaching was formed; "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand; *Matt.* iv. 17. That is, the gospel-state approaches, or hath approached to you. The prayer he taught his disciples stands on the same foot, wherein they are instructed to pray, *Thy kingdom come;* Matt. vi. 10. Therefore when he spake to the multitude, of the special glories of his gospel, and especially of his atoning sacrifice, it was generally in parables; and when he instructed his disciples more particularly in private, he gave them but hints of it, and told them that they should publish these things upon the house-tops after the Son of man should rise from the dead, but not before.

Even just before his death, his own disciples themselves could not bear many things that he had to teach them; *John* xvi. 12. These things were reserved therefore for the forty days communication with them after his resurrection, when he spake with them *of things pertaining to the kingdom of God;* Acts i. 3. and more especially for the teachings of his own Spirit, which he poured out upon them after he went to heaven. By these means they were more completely furnished for their ministry, and learned the doctrines of the gospel, in a more perfect manner than ever our Lord himself taught them in his life-time.

Thus it appears that though Christ was the founder of a new religion among men, yet there is good reason to be given, why he did not teach plainly and publicly some of the chief doctrines of this religion, during his own life on earth, *viz.* because these doctrines were built on his death, his rising again, and ascending to heaven, which events were then unaccomplished.*

Thence we may infer, as we pass along, that if we would learn the plainest and fullest account of the gospel of Christ, it is not enough for us to consult merely his public sermons, or the histories of his life, which are called the four gospels, but we must read carefully the writings of the apostles after he went to heaven; for, during the life of Christ, neither did he preach, nor did the apostles themselves learn this gospel in the complete extent and glory of it. But this is only an inference by the way.

This is a proper pause in the middle of this Sermon, when it is read in families.

Let us proceed to the next reason to prove that Christ was a propitiation for our sins in his death.

VI. The terrors of soul, the consternation and inward agonies which our blessed Lord sustained a little before his death, were a sufficient proof that he endured punishments in his soul which were due to sin. These were vastly greater than the persecutions of bloody men, and the mere fears of dying: Can it ever be imagined, that the Son of God, whose virtues and graces, whose patience and holy fortitude sparkled with a divine lustre in the various parts of his life, should have shewn so much natural fear, and innocent disquietude of spirit, at the mere thoughts of death by the hands of men, if he had nothing else to encounter with? When this dreadful hour was come, and the powers of darkness were let loose upon him, *he began to be sore amazed and very heavy;* Mark xiv. 33. He told his disciples, *My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death; He went*

* I grant there are some other ingenious and probable reasons offered by the author of Miscellanea Sacra, why Christ did not communicate his gospel so completely to his disciples in his own life-time. Essay 1. p. 156—159. but what I have mentioned is sufficient for my purpose.

forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed, that if it were possible that hour might pass from him. He entreated his Father, *with prayers and supplications, with strong cries and tears;* Heb. v. 7. Such a terror was upon his spirits, that three times he repeated the same petition, that he might be excused if possible from drinking that cup of sorrow. The agonies of his soul pressed great drops of blood through the pores of his body, and bathed him in a crimson sweat. These cries and tears, these agonies and these sweats of blood preached the doctrine of atonement with dreadful power, and uncontested evidence. And as upon the cross, so in the garden, it is probable his Father forsook him, or hid his face from him, so that he had need of an angel to be sent down from heaven on purpose to comfort or strengthen him; *Luke* xxii. 43. It was here that he learned feelingly what was the curse of the broken law, what was that indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, that were due to the sin of man. Here the seed of the woman maintained a combat with that great serpent, the devil, and had his heel bruised; that is, his lower nature filled with anguish. And it is most probable, that his nature being worn out with this load of distress, was the true reason why he expired on the cross much sooner than was expected, so that *Pilate marvelled to hear that he was already dead;* Mark xv. 44.

I think it is impossible for the socinians, who represent the death of Christ chiefly as a martyrdom for the truth of his doctrine, and an example of patience in suffering, to support their scheme against this argument, or to give any tolerable account of this amazement which possessed his spirit before his enemies came near him, and of these agonies of soul which our blessed Lord sustained. Surely such sorrows and such terrors demonstrate the work of propitiation and the dreadful labour of reconciling an offended God and sinful man.

VII. This doctrine of satisfaction for sin by the death of Christ is declared, and confirmed, and explained at large by the apostles in their writings, when they were fully furnished for their ministry, by the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Read St. Paul's letters to the churches, and you find them abounding in such expressions as these; *Christ died for our sins;* 1 Cor. xv. 3. *He gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity;* Tit. ii. 13. *We have redemption through his blood;* Eph. i. 7. *God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them. He was made sin;* 2 Cor. v. 19, 21. *And he was made a curse for us;* Gal. iii. 13. *He is our propitiation and atonement;* 1 John ii. 2. *He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;* Heb. ix. 26. *When we were enemies we were reconciled to God by his death;* Rom. v. 10. *He made peace by the blood of his cross;* Col. i. 20. *He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification;* Rom. iii. 25. *By the righteousness of one man, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life. By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous;* Rom. v. 18, 19.

Now in the writings of St. Paul on this subject, we may observe three things.

1. He speaks this language, when in a plain doctrinal way he is teaching the gospel of Christ, therefore these expressions of his are to be understood in the common sense and meaning of the words. It would be a very great force and torture put upon these expressions, if we construe them only to mean, that God promised forgiveness to penitent sinners by Jesus Christ, as a messenger of grace, and that Christ died as a martyr to bear witness to this truth. Read his epistles to the Romans, the Ephesians,

the Colossians, and the Hebrews, where he treats of these subjects, and you will find that the apostle in his doctrine of atonement, means much more than this; for he talks in a plain rational and argumentative style and method, to inform the minds of men, of the true design of the death of Christ, and give them the clear knowledge of the truth.

2. He not only represents the death of Christ as our atonement for sin, but he declares this to be the great end of his appearing in the flesh. Heb. ii. 14. *Because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he himself also took part of the same, that through his own death he might destroy the devil.* Heb. x. 5. *Sacrifices of bulls and goats were insufficient, but a body hast thou prepared me;* Heb. ix. 26. *Once in the end of the world he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.* This was the design of his incarnation.

3. He makes the cross of Christ, and Christ crucified, to stand for the gospel itself, and glories in it; 1 Cor. i. 23, 24. *Christ crucified is the wisdom of God, and the power of God.* 1 Cor. ii. 2. *I desired to know nothing among you but Christ, and him crucified.* Gal. vi. 14. *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ:* And many such expressions he uses, as though the public sermons of Christ, the example of Christ, and the duties that he prescribed, were all as nothing without the atoning virtue of his death, and his sacrifice on the cross; for all these would not save us without his dying. This is eminently the gospel.

Nor is the apostle Paul singular in declaring this doctrine of atonement, or different in his sentiments from the other apostles. You find Peter and John saying the same things in their epistles: 1 Peter i. 18, 19. *Ye were not redeemed with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish.* 1 Peter ii. 24. *Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.* Ver. 21. *Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God.* 1 John i. 7. *The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.* 1 John ii. 1, 2. *Jesus Christ the righteous is the propitiation for our sins.* 1 John iii. 16. *Hereby perceive we the love of God, that he laid down his life for us.* Rev. i. 5, 6. *Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory and dominion for ever.* These apostles take every occasion to publish the same gospel, and the same promises and hopes of salvation, by the death and sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ.

VIII. To sum up many arguments in one, These were the doctrines that were witnessed to the world by those amazing gifts of the Holy Ghost, which attended the gospel.* The gifts of tongues, the wonders of prophecy, the powers of healing and destroying, communicated to men in such a manner as the world never saw, and astonished the spectators, all confirmed the truth of this atonement which the apostles preached. These were the discoveries that were made so gloriously successful for the conversion of nations. These doctrines subdued kingdoms to the belief of them, and triumphed over the souls of men: These were the truths that changed the corrupt natures of men into virtue, piety, and goodness; that turned sinners into saints in multitudes, and raised a church for Christ in the world, in spite of all the rage of enemies, the superstition of the priests, the learning and sophistry of the philosophers, the wild prejudices of the people, and the tyranny of princes.

The primitive christian writers, who were converted to the faith, teach us these same

* It was generally agreed that these gifts of the Holy Ghost were never set in such an illustrious light, for the defence of christianity, as in a late treatise, entitled Miscellanea Sacra, Essay I. especially from page 141 to the end.

doctrines of the grace of God, through the atonement of Christ, the pardon of sin through his blood, which had so much power over their own souls. In the faith of these doctrines, and the hope of eternal life by them, they became the glorious confessors and martyrs of a crucified Christ, and cast down the tempter and accuser by the blood of the Lamb. This is the doctrine that has been delivered down to us through all ages of the christian church; and though the antichristian powers have mingled it with many of their superstitions, yet the gates of hell have never been able to prevail against it so as to root it out. This is the religion which, two hundred years ago, was reformed from popish corruptions; and while our blessed reformers laboured to recover and convey it to us in its primitive glory, many of them were called to witness and seal it with their own blood.

An occasional Remark.—Since these were the truths that the last, and brightest, and best revelation of God communicated to men; since this propitiation of Christ was the doctrine which the inspired apostles taught, and in which all the foregoing revelations centre, even from the beginning of the world: It is by this therefore that all the former and darker discoveries are to be explained; all the types and shadows of ceremonial worship, and the obscure language of prophecy, must have their true light cast upon them by this doctrine. This is the clue to guide us into the mysteries and deep things of God, which lay hid under the vails for so many ages. The great apostle St. Paul shews us how to penetrate and unfold all the ancient dispensations, by the doctrine of the Son of God coming into the flesh, by his dying as a sacrifice for sin, by his rising and ascending to heaven, by his appearing there as a priest to intercede for sinners in the virtue of his sacrifice, and by his sitting there as a king, to reign over all things for the salvation of his people, whom he has purchased with his own blood.

The Recollection.—What a variety of supports has this blessed doctrine of our reconciliation to God by the atoning death of Christ! What a train of arguments to confirm it are drawn down from the very first entrance of sin into the world! Guilty nature urges us on to enquire after such an atonement, and the Bible reveals it to us in a long succession of types, promises, and prophecies, in narratives and plain instructions, in darker or brighter discoveries from the beginning of mankind.

If I forsake the gospel of Christ, and his atonement for sin, whither shall my guilty conscience fly to find a better relief? This is the doctrine that supplies the chiefest wants of a guilty creature, and the chief defects of natural light and reason. Nature shews me no way to recompense the justice of God for my innumerable sins. Nature shews me nothing which God will accept in the room of my own perfect obedience, or in the room of my everlasting punishment. If I leave thee, O Jesus, whither should I go? Thy sufferings are the spring of my hope of pardon, and my eternal life depends on thy painful and shameful death.

I see and obtain in this gospel of atonement all that the heathen world laboured for in vain, by many wild inventions, and painful superstitions. The anger of the God of heaven is pacified by the sufferings of Jesus his Son. O my God, let my soul never run back to infidelity and heathenism, and rove abroad among the foolish inventions of men, in quest of any other methods of atonement. The blood of Jesus is all my hope.

Here I see the gracious promises of ancient times fulfilled, even the first promise of mercy that was ever made to fallen man. Here I behold the accomplishment of the predictions of the holy prophets since the world began. 1 Pet. i. 11. *It was the Spirit*

of Christ spake in them, concerning the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Gen. iii. 15. Here I see *the seed of the woman breaking the head of the serpent.* 1 John iii. 8. *The Son of God manifested,* and by his own death *destroyed the works of the devil.* Here I behold, *Daniel* ix. 24, 26. the Messiah *cut off, but not for himself.* I behold him here on his cross, *finishing* iniquity, *transgression, and sin;* and *bringing in everlasting righteousness.* I see, *Isaiah* lii. x. *his soul made an offering for* the *sins* of men: And the prophets Isaiah and Daniel conspiring with the blessed apostles to point to Jesus as an all-sufficient Saviour.

I see the types and shadows of the Jewish religion so happily answered in this doctrine of the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ, that I am well assured that this is the substance, for it bears the shape and lineaments of the shadow. This is the great original; for it carries the exact resemblance of the types and pictures that went before. The ancient religion of emblems and figures was confirmed by the amazing wonders of Moses; but the religion of Christ, which contains in it the substance and true glory of all former dispensations, is not only attested by the miracles of the Son of God, but he himself also appears in the midst of it, in so divine a correspondence with the typical ordinances of Moses, as gives a double and most undoubted confirmation to his own blessed gospel, and his own atonement for sin. Every thing that established the religion of the Jews, serves to establish me in the religion of Christ. Their lavers and washings, their altars and sacrifices were divine; but they were divine only for a season. These ancient vails which covered the gospel, were of God's own contrivance: and when they were exhibited to the people, especially in the days of Moses and Solomon, they made a bright and sacred appearance; but now the gospel stands forth unvailed, and in perfect light, God himself hath folded up these vails as an old garment, and laid them aside. The substance is come, and the shadows disappear. Blessed be the Lord that I was brought forth since the Sun of Righteousness is risen upon the earth, and the morning clouds are vanished away.

I hear Jesus, my great Prophet, preaching this doctrine of propitiation for our sins by his death, in his own ministry; though he was content to do it in a more obscure and imperfect manner: And I now see the reason why he taught this truth chiefly in parables, because it was not proper in that age to be published to the multitude in plain language, till he had actually died and rose again.

I behold his terrible agonies in the garden, before he came near the cross. I see the blessed Son of God labouring under the burden of our guilt, wrestling, and sweating blood, under the unknown impressions of that tribulation and wrath, that indignation and anguish which was due to my sins. What else could make so glorious and divine a person discover such dreadful distress of soul? Again, he cries out on the cross with anguish of spirit, he bleeds, he groans, he dies. I acknowledge the truth of the doctrine of his atonement. I read it in all his agonies. These are such sufferings and such sorrows as are beyond all that men could inflict, or that a mere man could bear, beyond all the common terrors of death and the grave. My Saviour sustained a heavier burden, and was engaged in harder work; a labour more dreadful and more glorious. He was then making atonement to divine justice for my sins. And blessed be his name for ever and ever.

I read the same doctrine of atonement for sin, by the death of Christ, in the writings of his holy apostles. This was the gospel which they preached to the Jews, and to the rest

of the nations. This they delivered down in the sacred records of the New Testament, whence we derive our religion and our hope. The language in which they expressed our reconciliation to God by the death of Christ carries with it such evidence, and such strength, that if I believe these books to be divine, I cannot but receive this doctrine as the truth of God; and I would learn of St. Paul, *Gal.* vi. 14. *to glory in the cross of Christ;* and ii. 20. *to live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

When I read the astonishing gifts of the blessed Spirit, communicated to the first preachers and professors of the gospel; when I survey these gifts in all their extensive glory, and in all their force of argument, I look upon all of them as a heap of united wonders, conspiring to support this doctrine of the propitiation of Christ, which was every where taught by these inspired favourites of heaven. Every strange tongue which they spoke teaches me this blessed truth. Every disease of body which they healed, assures me that the stripes which Christ sustained were for the healing of our souls. Every unclean spirit which they cast out establishes my belief, that by the atoning death of Christ we are delivered from the power of the devil. Every surprizing wonder which they wrought, gives me a firmer persuasion of this wonderous doctrine, that the Son of God died to give us life.

Blessed Saviour, let the same spirit, by whose influence they healed the sick, they cast out devils, and wrought all these wonders, write this holy religion, and this doctrine of thy atonement for sins deep in my heart. O let me make it my daily food, the support and the life of my soul. Teach me to apply it to all the holy purposes for which so glorious a doctrine was revealed to the world. In the faith of this atonement, by the blood of Jesus, let me join in the songs of angels, and pronounce with joy; Luke ii. 14. *Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will to men:* Glory to God my Father, and my Saviour: Pardon, life, and salvation to dying sinners. *Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMON XXXV.

FAITH AND REPENTANCE ENCOURAGED BY THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST.

I.

WHERE shall the guilty conscience go
To find a sure relief?
Can bleeding bulls or goats bestow
A balm to ease my grief?

II.

Will popish rites and penances
Release my soul from sin?
What insufficient things are these
To calm the wrath divine!

III.

God, the great God, who rules the skies,
The gracious and the just,
Makes his own Son our sacrifice:
And there lies all our trust.

IV.

O never let my thoughts renounce
The gospel of my God,
Where vilest crimes are cleans'd at once
In Christ's atoning blood.

V.

Here rest my faith and ne'er remove;
Here let repentance rise,
While I behold his bleeding love,
His dying agonies.

VI.

With shame and sorrow here I own
How great my guilt has been:
This is my way t' approach the throne,
And God forgives my sin.

SERMON XXXVI.

THE USE OF THE FOREGOING SERMONS, WITH INTERMINGLED REFLECTIONS.

ROMANS iii. 25.

WHOM GOD HATH SET FORTH TO BE A PROPITIATION.

THIS glorious doctrine of the propitiation of Christ, has been explained and proved at large in the former discourses. It remains that we shew the proper uses of it. If we would set our thoughts at work to draw inferences, we might derive thence many truths, as well as duties. But as my chief design is to promote practical godliness, I shall content myself with mentioning two doctrinal inferences, and all the rest shall more immediately direct our practice.

First doctrinal inference.—How vain are all the labours and pretences of mankind, sinful, guilty mankind, to seek or hope for any better religion than that which is contained in the gospel of Christ! It is here alone, that we can find the solid and rational principles of reconciliation to an offended God. This doctrine of atonement for sin, by the sufferings of Christ, is a substantial ground for our establishment in christianity, and should be an effectual persuasive, to continue in the profession of the gospel; Heb. iv. 14. *Having such a High-priest as Jesus the Son of God, who, after he had died for our sins, rose again, and entered into heaven, let us hold fast our profession.* All the religions that God ever appointed for fallen man, meet and centre here. If you have any regard to reason and argument, if you would follow the dictates of revelation, or if you would seek the peace and happiness of your souls, never, never forsake the religion of Jesus.

Reflection.—" My soul, hast thou heard this doctrine of the propitiation of Christ, and the arguments that support it in the last discourse! Dost thou receive, dost thou believe this great article of faith? Hold it fast then, and live upon it continually. Never hope to find a surer spring of pardon, nor a sweeter relief for a guilty conscience. Maintain this hope, and hold fast thy Bible, where this blessing is discovered to men. Keep upon thy spirit a due sense and relish of this atonement for sin: It will be a blessed guard against infidelity, and assist thee to stand in an hour of temptation, against the cavils of men, who have renounced the gospel of God."

" But remember, O my soul, that if thou sin wilfully against this gospel, that is, if thou abandon this grace, and reject it utterly with contempt and opposition, *after thou hast received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries;* Heb. x. 26, 27. This scripture seems to stand like a divine engine, charged with vengeance and eternal death, and pointed not only against the primitive apostates, but against some of the profane infidels and scoffers of our age, who have renounced, reproached, and ridiculed the gospel which they once professed. Remember also, that it carries in it a very dangerous and threatening aspect, upon those who continue to profess

the religion of the Bible, but cancel out of it the doctrine of the atonement of Christ; for there remains no other sacrifice. Have a care, therefore, O my soul, and stand at a distance from their company, who deny the propitiatory virtue of the blood of Christ! Let them find a better ground to build their hopes of pardon upon: But do thou lay thy foundation *on this rock, and the powers of hell shall not prevail against it.*"

Second doctrinal inference.—How strange and unreasonable is the doctrine of the popish church, who, while they profess to believe the religion of Christ, yet introduce many other methods of atonement for sin, beside the sufferings of the Son of God, and the atonement which Jesus has made.

Every time they celebrate the Lord's supper, and the priest communicates the consecrated bread to his deluded followers, they suppose there is a fresh propitiation made for sin: Therefore they call it the sacrifice of the mass, and imagine that their unscriptural representation of this holy ordinance, is a real propitiation, not only for the sins of the living, but for those that are dead also. Whereas St. Paul assures us; Heb. ix. 28. *Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.* Heb. x. 14. *By one offering he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified.* I confess, this practice of theirs in the mass, looks something like a pretence of honour, to the name and death of Christ; because, they declare, the mass is but, as it were, a repetition of the very sacrifice of Christ himself: Though that is expressly contrary to the language of scripture; for *this man Jesus, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down at the right hand of God;* Heb. x. 12. because his single sacrifice was all-sufficient, and needs no repetition.

But, beside this, they have many other methods of atonement which men perform, and which they add to the atonement of Christ. What are all their imposed penances, their pilgrimages on bare feet, the scourgings of their own bodies, the garments of hair worn upon their flesh, and their multitudes of repeated Latin prayers? What are they all but toilsome and painful labours, invented by men, to make atonement for the sins of the soul?

Reflection.—" Blessed be the name of our God, who has delivered our nation from this bondage of iniquity, from these foolish yokes and burdens of superstition; these profane dishonours done to the sacrifice and atonement of Jesus our Saviour. We are ready to look on popery now as lying afar off, a-cross the seas, as an evil thing at a great distance, and are not so much impressed with a grateful sense of our preservation from it. We are too soon forgetful of our narrow escape from this mischief, by the late revolution, and the protestant succession; by the arm of God, and by the two best of kings, William our deliverer, and George our defender. Had it not been for these providences of heaven, and these princes on earth, our land might have been filled with these superstitions, and they might have been imposed on us, under the penalties of imprisonment and poverty, torment and death. And how could we stand in the fiery trial? Awake, O my heart, and let my tongue awake into songs of praise and salvation, that I am not tempted or compelled to disgrace the blood of my Saviour by having other atonements for sin imposed on my conscience. And in the midst of thy praises to God, O my soul, drop a tear of pity on thy brethren, who dwell in the midst of these temptations, and in the language of christian sympathy, lift up a groan to heaven for them, and say, *How long, O Lord, how long?*"

But let my thoughts return home from the popish countries and their superstitions.

It is not enough for me to renounce the inventions of men, as any part of my righteousness, to procure my pardon and acceptance in the sight of God, but even the duties which God himself has required, the duties of faith and love, of repentance and new obedience, must never stand in the room of the atonement of Christ. They are all poor defective works, and want to be sprinkled with the blood of his sacrifice! They were never designed to join with the obedience of Christ, in procuring the favour of an offended God. Have a care, therefore, O my soul, of resting in the best of thy holy services, or of making them a matter of merit, to introduce thee before his presence. When thou art raised nearest to heaven in the practice of christian graces and duties, fall down before the throne, confess thy unworthiness, and say; Psalm cxxx. 3, 4. *If thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, who can stand? But there is forgiveness with thee,* and plentiful redemption by the blood of Jesus. There lies all my hope.

Thus I have finished the two inferences for instruction, I proceed now to those which more immediately relate to our practice.

This blessed doctrine of the atonement of Christ, runs like a golden thread through the whole of our religion: It unites the several parts of it in a sweet harmony, and casts a lustre over them all. Let us then particularly survey some of the various practical uses to which it may be applied.

I. It is a solid foundation, on which the greatest of sinners may hope for acceptance with God, when they return to him; It is a sufficient ground for their firm trust in Christ as a Saviour, and a reviving cordial against sinking in despair.

Let the crimes of a creature be never so great and heinous, yet the atonement of the Son of God is equal to them all. Let the defilements and stains of the soul be never so deep and crimson, the blood of Christ has a strange and divine virtue to wash them away, and to make the sinner white as snow, even in the sight of a holy God. *Rev.* vii. 14. *They washed their garments, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. This is a faithful saying,* as St. Paul tells Timothy, *and worthy of all acceptation, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief;* 1 Tim. i. 15. And our Saviour assures us, *All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to men;* Matt. xii. 14. because that he knew that he could make compensation to Divine Justice for all this guilt. Therefore all sorts of blasphemers and criminals shall be forgiven, but those who blaspheme the Holy Spirit in his highest attestations to this gospel, and utterly refuse this atonement of Christ. 1 *John* i. 7. *The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin;* it is a divine sacrifice, and all-sufficient propitiation, extensive as our iniquities.

Jesus is an able, and an almighty Saviour, so that the vilest of sinners need not despair, if they are but willing to return to God, and come unto him, that they may be saved in his own way. The deepest wounds that were ever made in the conscience by sins, against light, and against love, sins of long continuance, sins of old obstinacy and repeated backslidings, sins of the blackest aggravations, may all be healed by applying the blood of Christ. Awake, arise, O sinner, fly to the hope that is set before thee! In vain will you try a thousand remedies, this is the only relief. A soul stung with the guilt of sin, as with the fiery serpent, must look up to Jesus hanging on the cross, there alone can he find healing and life.

Reflection.—"And what is my state? and what is my present case? Am I a sinner under the first awakenings of conscience? Is my spirit filled with dreadful apprehensions of an offended God, and of a law that pronounceth curses and death? Am I enquiring,

What shall I do to flee from the wrath to come? Does the load of all my past offences lie heavy upon me? Are my sins gone over my head as a heavy burden, too heavy for me to bear? Does Satan the tempter and the accuser, terrify and hurry me with despairing thoughts? Does he tell me that my crimes are too big to be forgiven? But Satan is *a liar from the beginning*. The gospel of Christ is divinely true. I come to Jesus as a great High-priest in the blood of his atonement: I come *weary and heavy laden*, under a sense of the guilt of past sins, and the remaining power of them in my soul. O Jesus fulfil thy promise, and give rest to my labouring and wounded spirit! Speak a word of peace and pardon to a sinking creature, and raise and receive him to hope and salvation. I am worthy to perish for ever, but thy death is worthy to procure life for me. Here I rest my heavy-laden soul, and with humble hope I wait for thy mercy.

"Or, am I a professor of religion that have fallen under great decays and wretched backslidings? Are old terrors and agonies returned upon my conscience with redoubled smart and anguish? Do I see my guilt? My shameful wanderings, my loathsome iniquities? Do I seem as it were to be cast out from God? And does he seem to shut the door of heaven against my prayers? Yet I will not despair: I will come in the name of Jesus the great atonement. Wash my guilty soul, O blessed Redeemer, with thy blood, and I will look again toward the holy temple, I will lift up a humble eye toward an offended God. Thy sacrifice is ever fresh in the power and virtue of it. The *Lamb as it had been slain*, appears in heaven with the marks of his sacrifice. I return with a broken heart to my heavenly Father; I return trembling and hoping in the merit of that everlasting atonement, and wait for restoring grace.

"Or, am I endeavouring to walk closely with my God, in all the duties of holiness, but daily infirmities break out, daily follies and guilt attend me? I make sore complaints indeed, because of the perpetual workings of indwelling sin; yet I will not despair. I love the word of God, and I read it to keep me from sinning: But St. John assures me *if any man sin* through the weakness of nature, and the prevalence of daily temptations, *we have an Advocate with the Father, even Jesus the righteous;* 1 John ii. 1, 2. And he is an effectual Advocate, because he is a propitiation for our sins; and he pleads in the virtue of his own blood. O may I ever maintain a constant exercise of faith on the Son of God, as my great High-priest! May I keep up a lively and delightful sense of the all-sufficiency of his atonement upon my spirit, that this which is the glory of my religion, may also be the daily life of my soul."

II. This doctrine of atonement for sin, should be used as a powerful motive to excite repentance in every heart where sin hath dwelt. Repentance and forgiveness are joined together in the commission of our exalted Saviour; *Acts* v. 31. Grace is a sweet and constraining motive to duty. There is abundant encouragement for sinners to repent and mourn before God for their past transgressions, because the blood of Jesus has provided pardon for them. 1 John i. 9. *If we confess our sins, God is faithful* to his own word, and *just and true* to his Son Jesus, *to forgive such* offenders, *and his blood will cleanse us from our sins.* The fallen angels are not called and encouraged by divine mercy, to repent of their heinous rebellions; for there is no Saviour, there is no atoning sacrifice provided for them.

Reflection.—"And is there such an atonement made? And are there such pardons provided for such guilty wretches as I have been? Is God reconciling himself to men,

and reconciling men to himself, by the blood of Jesus? Then let my soul mourn for all her follies, all her past iniquities. Let me be covered with shame, and lie in the dust at the foot of God. O let him speak peace and forgiveness to me, through the blood of Christ. I remember my guilt, and am confounded, and open my mouth no more to vindicate myself: I am overwhelmed with this amazing instance of divine love: God has sent his Son to die for me, and is pacified toward me, for all that I have done against him. O wretched creature that I am, that ever I should rebel against a God of such compassion! Against a God who all this while had such kind designs towards me, and was making his own way to reconciliation and peace, through the blood of his own Son! I find now by sweet experience, what I have been often told by other christians, that the most kindly workings of true repentance, arise from the sense of a forgiving God, and a dying Saviour."

III. Let us use this atonement of Christ as our constant way of access to God in all our prayers. This is the only safe method of address to the mercy-seat: It is ordained for this very purpose, to help a sinner near to God. Heb. x. 19, 21, 22. *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to* come *into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,—and having a High-priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart.* He is ascended to heaven before us; he is entered within the vail in virtue of his sacrifice: he has bespoke acceptance for our persons before the throne, and a favourable audience for all our prayers. Whatsoever we ask of the Father, we must ask it in his name, and especially in the name and virtue of his great atonement: All the blessings that God has to bestow are purchased by his sufferings.

Reflection.—" Remember, O my soul, and be humble; remember thou canst not be a welcome guest, even at the throne of grace, unless thou art sprinkled with the blood of Jesus. The God whom thou hast offended is a great God, and a terrible, a God of holiness, like a devouring fire: a God of awful majesty and severe justice, who will by no means clear the guilty, without some recompence for his broken law. Dare not approach him therefore, but under the protection of the blood of his Son: Christ is set forth as our propitiation through faith in his blood. If thou bring the atonement of Christ in the hand of thy faith, thou shalt find sweet and easy access: And when thou art filled with inward sorrows, thou mayest pour them all out, and spread thy complaints and thy burdens before the eyes of thy God, with inward consolation and hope.

" Lord, I have sinned, but thy Son has suffered: I come to the throne of grace in his name. My offences cry for vengeance, but the blood of Jesus speaks better things, and cries louder for peace and pardon. Let the voice of that blood which has made full satisfaction for the vilest sins, prevail over all my unworthiness. Let the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne be honoured this day, by introducing a guilty creature, with all his complaints and sorrows, into thy awful presence, and thy divine favour. Let me obtain grace in the hour of my distress and necessity: And O that I may find such success, and such ease of soul, in drawing near to God by the blood of Christ, that on all occasions I may run to this refuge, and maintain humble and constant communion with God my Father, in this new and living way of access. May this earthly and foolish spirit of mine never be such a stranger as it has been at the mercy-seat, since the door of approach is always open, since I have so glorious an introducer."

IV. We should use this atonement of Christ as a divine guard against temptation and sin: 1 Pet. i. 15, 18, 19. *As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all man-*

ner of conversation—for ye are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot.

Reflection.—" And has this soul of mine, which was in slavery to sin and the power of Satan, been redeemed by the death of the Son of God? And shall I run back to my old slavery, and give myself up again to the reign and tyranny of sin? Has this guilty and polluted soul been washed in so precious a laver as the blood of the Son of God? And shall I defile myself again? Shall I *return with the dog to his vomit, or with the swine that was washed to her wallowing in the mire;* 2 Pet. ii. 22. It was sin that cost my Redeemer so dear, that cost him agonies and death: And shall I indulge such an enemy in my heart, and obey it in my practice? *God forbid! How shall I that am dead to sin,* by my interest in a dying Saviour, *live any longer therein?* Rom. vi. 2. It is a scandal and reproach to this blessed doctrine of atonement, if I should ever dare to give a loose to my iniquities, while I profess faith in the blood of Christ. Grant, O Jesus, that I may never turn this adorable grace of thine into wantonness."

V. The atonement of Christ is an argument of prevailing force to be used in prayer, when we plead for the aids of the blessed Spirit; when we ask for his sacred influences to enlighten, to sanctify, or to comfort our souls. The Spirit flows down to us in the blood of Christ.

Reflection.—" Holy Father, thou hast not withheld thy Son Jesus, but hast given him to die for me, and wilt thou not give me thy Spirit to live in me, and to raise me to a divine life? Even when I was dead in trespasses and sins, my blessed Saviour poured out his own soul to death, that I might be recovered to thy favour; and shall I not have thy image impressed upon me by the Spirit, that I may appear before thee in the beauty of holiness? Shall I be sprinkled with the blood of Christ, and have my errors forgiven, and shall I not have divine light bestowed upon me, that I may not wander afresh in the ways of error and darkness? Is my guilt cancelled, and are my iniquities removed, by the great atonement of the Son of God, and wilt thou not bestow thy sanctifying Spirit upon me, to guard me from renewed guilt and fresh iniquities? Lord, have I not fled to lay hold on the hope set before me? Hast thou not forgiven all my sins? And shall not the Spirit, the Comforter, speak peace to my soul, and fill me with hope and joy in believing? Wilt thou deny thy Spirit to any creature for whom thy Son has poured out his invaluable life and blood?"

If this Sermon be too long, here is a proper pause.

How great and desirable are the advantages that we have found already to be derived from this gospel of atonement! May our souls possess and improve them all! But there are still more treasures of divine grace to be dug out of this golden mine: It is an inexhausted fountain of duties and blessings. I proceed therefore to point out more of them to the eye of faith.

VI. We should use this doctrine of propitiation for sin by the death of Christ, as an everlasting spring of holy love to God the Father, and to his Son Jesus Christ. Great and unspeakable was the love of God the Father. 1 John iv. 10. *Herein is love; not that we loved him, but he hath loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* Great and unspeakable is the love of Jesus the Saviour; *it has heights and depths, and lengths, and breadths in it which pass our knowledge;* Eph. iii. 18. For, *when we were enemies, he died to reconcile us to God;* Rom. v. 10. The great and blessed God had no richer gift

than his Son, and he bestowed his Son upon us. Christ Jesus himself made his flesh and soul an offering for our sins. It was a spring of divine love that arose from the bosom of God, and runs through all this sacred transaction in many blessed streams: It runs through all the length of time into a long eternity. How should this melt and soften our hearts into returns of love to the great God, and to his Son Jesus Christ. *We love him*, saith the beloved apostle, *because he first loved us;* 1 John iv. 19.

Reflection.—"And what shall I do to raise my love to God my Father, and my blessed Redeemer? When I was a stranger and an enemy, God reconciled me to himself, by sending his Son to die for me. How hard is this wretched heart of mine, that it feels no more powerful impressions from this amazing love and compassion of God to a rebel creature! What sorrows, what indignities, what bitter scoffs, what loads of reproach, what inward and unknown agonies of soul, what a shameful, and painful, and cursed death, did the blessed Son of God endure for my sake! And can I forbear to love him? Alas! how cold are my affections! How feeble and languid is my zeal! What poor sorry returns do I make for these infinite condescensions of divine love! Warm my heart, O Jesus, with this love, and inflame all my affections. O may all the powers of my soul exert their utmost diligence in the service of the Son of God, that has redeemed me! His love was stronger than death, and shall it not constrain me to love him? Did he lay down his life for my sake, and shall I not lay out and employ my life with all my talents and capacities to his honour? Blessed Jesus, I grieve, I mourn, I am confounded that I feel no more of the constraining influences of thy dying love, to make all my duty and obedience easy and delightful."

VII. This doctrine carries in it a strong persuasive to that love and pity which we should shew on all occasions to our fellow-creatures. When the apostle John had magnified the love of God, in that he had sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins: He makes this inference, *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another;* 1 John iv. 11. And in the foregoing chapter, 1 *John* iii. 16. he raises this inference of love to a sublime degree: *Because God hath laid down his life for us, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* But how can any person make a pretence to christianity, who *hath the goods of this world, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him?* verse 17. Now can such an hardened and cruel heart pretend that the love of God dwells there?

This blessed truth of the forgiveness of sin through the propitiation of Christ, demands of us the duties of forbearance and forgiveness, of kindness and tenderness to men. *Be ye kind one to another, and tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you;* Eph. iv. 32. Shall christians bite and devour each other, shall they rage against each other with bitter reproaches, shall they quarrel, and grieve, and wound each other, who were once fellow-slaves in the chains of guilt and death, and were redeemed together by the voluntary death of the Son of God? Shall they who have known and tasted such divine compassion, imitate the rage, and malice, and envy of hell, rather than the heavenly example of the blessed Jesus?

Reflection.—"And hast thou never felt the influence of this divine truth, O my soul, this blessed doctrine of atoning love? Dost thou swell with anger? Dost thou resent every supposed injury? Dost thou indulge a spirit of revenge? And do thy thoughts contrive mischief to men, while the thoughts of the Son of God are all tenderness and compassion towards thee? Had he resented all thy iniquities, had he meditated ven-

geance for all thy crimes, he had never laid down his life to rescue thee from hell, and thy state and thy case had been miserable without hope.

" Hast thou no pity for the poor, when their necessities and groans cry aloud for thy relief? The Son of God did not deal thus with thee: He expended the riches of his love upon thee, even his unsearchable riches of grace: And when no other price was sufficient to redeem thee from death, he gave up himself for thee, and made his own soul an offering for thy sins. Remember therefore, when provocations to anger are set before thee, and thou feelest the inward rising passion, remember the death and love of the Son of God, remember the price of thy forgiveness."

VIII. Patience under heavy afflictions, is another divine lesson that we should learn from this doctrine of the atoning death of Christ; and not patience only, but holy joy in the midst of earthly sorrows may be derived from the same spring. Rom. v. 1, 2, 3, 8. *Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,—we rejoice in hope of the glory of God; and not only so, but we glory in tribulations,—because God has commended his love towards us at this rate, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.*

Reflection.—" Why then should my spirit be overwhelmed under the troubles of this life? Surely the mercies which I enjoy are infinitely greater than all my sorrows. God has redeemed my soul from hell by the blood of his Son. Lord, I would suppress all my repining thoughts; I am humble, I am thankful; and though thou visitest me with chastisements, to reduce me from my follies, thou hast not laid on me the burden of my sins, nor called me to the hard and dreadful work of answering the severe demands of thy broken law. This burden thy own Son has borne; this work he has performed. *The cup* of common sorrows *which my heavenly Father puts into my hand, shall I not drink it?* It is not a cup of such anguish and terror as the Son of God drunk up for my sake. Why should a creature saved from hell, be impatient and uneasy at any of the little sufferings which he sustains here on earth!

" This is not only a powerful argument to compose my soul to resignation under troubles, but even to raise me to holy joy. Surely he that has loved me, and has given his own Son up to death for me, does not afflict me willingly, nor grieve my spirit beyond what he sees necessary. He transacts all his affairs with me according to that covenant of love whereby he ordained his Son to die for me; and he will bestow upon me every good thing in its proper season: *He that spared not his own Son, but gave him up to die for us, shall he not with him freely give us all things;* Rom. viii. 32.

" Bless the name of thy God, O my soul, let my heart be filled with thankfulness, and my lips with praise: He has distinguished thee, my soul, by peculiar blessings. He has made no such preparation of an atonement for angels, those heavenly creatures, when they sinned against him, but they are cast down into chains of darkness; and why am not I cast into chains of darkness too? He has not revealed this grace to several large heathen nations: They know nothing of a Redeemer: But he has revealed his Son to me, in the glory and grace of his atonement: He has raised me to the hope of eternal life, by the death and the resurrection of Jesus his Son. Let all my murmurings and impatience be silent for ever. The worst of *my present sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed,* the glory purchased by the sufferings of Christ; *Rom.* viii. 18.

IX. The doctrine of the atonement of Christ gives us a blessed invitation to the

Lord's supper, where Christ crucified is set forth before us in the memorials of his propitiation.

The propitiation of Christ is of so constant and universal use in the whole of our religion, that our blessed Lord would not suffer us to live without some sensible tokens and signs of it, and these are to be frequently repeated to the end of the world; and therefore he has given a most express and positive command; *Luke* xxii. 19. *This do in remembrance of me.* And the apostle Paul; 1 *Cor.* xi. 29. where he teaches the Corinthians this ordinance, assures them, *As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.* Our blessed Lord has not given us such a peculiar memorial of any of his other actions or offices as he has of his priesthood and sacrifice.

Reflection.—" And shall I not do honour to the memory of my dying Saviour? Shall I refuse to remember my great High-priest, and his propitiation for sin, in the way and manner in which he has enjoined me? Do I not trust in the death of Christ for my salvation, and shall I not glory in his cross, and profess it before the world? Do I not stand in daily need of this bread of life which was broken for my sake, and shall I reject the memorials of his broken body, when his flesh and spirit were made an offering for my guilt? Do I not hope for forgiveness through his blood, and shall I not drink this cup of reconciliation which he has mingled? I have learned by the gospel, the excellency and virtue of the propitiation of Christ, to cancel my iniquities, and shall I not receive this propitiation in all the methods of his own appointment? Shall I dare to say, it is enough for me to read it in the Bible, and to hear it in the ministry of the word, and to meditate on it in private, when my Lord has given me an express command to receive it also in those emblems and sensible figures of bread and wine, and has sanctified them for this very purpose? Is this a kind return to him that died for me?

" Blessed Redeemer, forgive all my omissions, my delays, my careless or slothful neglects of this holy ordinance of thine, and all my sinful indifferency about it. O scatter all my doubts, banish all my excuses, and bring me to thy holy table as a penitent and humble disciple, as a worthy and joyful receiver; there let me join with my fellow-christians and remember thy dying love."

X. We may use this doctrine as our most effectual defence against the terrors of dying; and as our joyful hope of a blessed resurrection.

The atonement of Christ is a divine support in the agonies of death. At such a season a thousand past iniquities will sometimes croud in upon the memory, and fill the soul with horror, and perhaps Satan the accuser makes a dreadful assault upon the conscience at the same time, and torments the spirit with painful agonies: But the most formidable terrors, the sharpest agonies find a relief here, the very sting of death is taken away by the death of Christ; 1 *Cor.* xv. 56. *The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin to condemn us is the law of God: but thanks be to God through Christ Jesus,* who hath answered the demands of the condemning law, and taken away the sting of death by his atoning sacrifice.

We may now venture into the presence of a holy and righteous God, laying fresh hold of the atonement in a dying hour by a living faith, and having our departing spirits sprinkled with the blood of Christ. It was this very blood in the virtue of which Jesus himself was raised from the dead; *Heb.* xiii. 20. *The God of peace brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.* It was in the virtue of this blood that he ascended and appeared before

God in heaven: *Heb.* ix. 12. *Christ by his own blood entered into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.*

Did the cursed guilt of our sins bring the Son of God, down from heaven to earth, did it smite him to death, and lay him low in the grave? But the power of his complete atonement has broken the bonds of death and the grave; this has brought him back to life again, and has raised him from earth to heaven; and by the same blood of his cross he has opened an effectual way for our rising from the dead, and our final admission into the place of blessedness. As Aaron the Jewish high-priest might not dare to venture into the holy of holies without the blood of expiation, so Christ our great High-priest, when he had once taken our sins upon him, might not ascend to heaven into the presence of God, till in the language of scripture he could carry his blood with him, till he could shew a full atonement. Now that very same blood and sacrifice which gave Christ himself a joyful admission into heaven, who was the great Shepherd and the Representative of his people, will also give every one of his sheep a safe and glorious entrance into the presence of God. This we may hope for with a cheerful heart, when our departing spirits are called away from this lower world. And for the further joy of our faith, we should remember also, that in the virtue of the same blood we shall be raised from the grave: The grave shall obey the voice of him that died for us; for he has ransomed us from the power of it. Then the soul and body of every disciple of Christ shall be introduced with divine acceptance to dwell where Jesus is, and *to behold his glory;* John xvii. 24.

Reflection.—" Why then art thou so terrified, O my soul, at the thoughts of dying? Why all these shudderings of the flesh, and these agonies of spirit at the apprehensions of death and the grave? Are the sins of thy life great and numerous? Do they throng in upon thy conscience, and fill thy thoughts with tumult and terror? Remember the time, the dark and dismal hour, when Jesus thy Saviour bore all those very sins in his own body on the tree: There the demands of Divine Justice were all answered, and sin has now no power to condemn the saint, nor has death power to hurt him in his best interests; *Rom.* viii. 34. *Who shall condemn? It is Christ that died, yea, rather has risen again,* as a complete conqueror over death. And is not Christ thy Head, thy Redeemer, and the Captain of thy salvation?

" Let me call to mind the solemn seasons of transaction between Christ and my soul. Have I not resigned myself to him as an all-sufficient Saviour, to deliver me both from the guilt and the power of every sin? Have I not trusted in the blood of his atonement, and felt the quickening power of his Spirit as the fruit of his blood? Has he not raised me to a new life? What if the mortal body must die, because it has sin in it, yet my spirit shall live because Christ is my righteousness. Fear not then, O my soul, but go cheerfully through the gates of death when he calleth thee. Jesus has taken away the terrors of that dark passage. He has deprived death of its sting, and sanctified the grave for a sweet sleeping place. Awaken all the powers of thy faith, and triumph over the conquered enemy. The justice of God is become thy friend, and death can do no mischief to the friends of God, reconciled by the blood of Jesus. Look forward and behold thy great Fore-runner ready to introduce thee into the presence of *his Father and thy Father, his God and thy God,* with exceeding joy. Bid a joyful farewel to flesh and sense, those busy tempters; farewel to time and this world, and all things that are not

divine and holy. Turn thy back on all visible objects, close thine eyes with a smiling countenance, forget earth for ever, and enter into the heavenly mansions."

XI. The view of Christ as our propitiation, is not only a safe defence against the terrors of death, but it is a divine allurement toward the upper world. There lives our dear Redeemer, our blessed and beloved Lord, who ransomed our souls from sin and hell. There he reigns on the throne as king of glory, who once hung on the cross as our sacrifice of atonement: The Lamb of God in the midst of the throne, with the signals of his death upon him. The sight of these signals shall open all our springs of love: Joy, love, and gratitude shall fill the departed spirit: As soon as we are absent from the body, we are present with the Lord who died for us.

Reflection.—" O happy day and happy hour indeed, that shall finish the long absence of my beloved, and place me within sight of my adored Jesus! When shall I see that lovely, that illustrious Friend, who laid down his own life to rescue mine, his own valuable life to ransom a worm, a rebel that deserved to die? He suffered, he groaned, he died; but he rose again, the blessed Saviour arose, he lives, he reigns exalted over all the creation. Faith beholds him risen, and reigning, but it is through a glass, it is at a distance, and but darkly. I wait, I hope for a more divine pleasure; it is a delight worth dying for, to behold him face to face, to see him as he is, to converse with his wonderous person, and to survey his glories. Alas! my soul is too patient of this long distance and separation. O for the wings of love, to bear my spirit upward in holy breathings! Methinks I would long to be near him, to be with him, to give him my highest praises and thanks for my share in his dying love. I would rise to join with the blessed acclamations, the holy songs of the saints on high, while they behold their exalted Saviour. How sweet their songs! How loud their acclamations! This is the man, the God-man who died for me! This is the Son of God, who was buffetted, who was crowned with thorns, who endured exquisite anguish, and unknown sorrows for me, who was scourged, and wounded, and crucified for me! This is the glorious Person, the Lamb of God, who washed me from my sins in his own blood. Blessing, honour, and salvation to his holy name for ever." *Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMON XXXVI.

CHRIST'S PROPITIATION IMPROVED.

I.

LORD, didst thou send thy Son to die
For such a guilty wretch as I?
And shall thy mercy not impart
Thy Spirit to renew my heart?

II.

Lord, hast thou wash'd my garments clean
In Jesus' blood from shame and sin?
Shall I not strive with all my power
That sin pollute my soul no more!

III.

Shall I not bear my Father's rod,
The kind corrections of my God,
When Christ upon the cursed tree
Sustain'd a heavier load for me?

IV.

Why should I dread my dying day
Since Christ hath took the curse away,
And taught me with my latest breath
To triumph o'er thy terrors, death?

V.

O rather let me wish and cry,
" When shall my soul get loose and fly
To upper worlds? When shall I see
The God, the man, that dy'd for me?"

VI.

I shall behold his glories there,
And pay him my eternal share
Of praise, and gratitude, and love,
Among ten thousand saints above.

SERMON XXXVII.

THE CHRISTIAN'S TREASURE.

1 COR. iii. 21.

ALL THINGS ARE YOURS.

IT is a peculiar delight of this apostle to survey the blessings we derive from Christ, and to run over the glories of the gospel in flowing language. At the end of this chapter he reckons up the privileges of the saints, and tells them, they have an interest in all things: "It does not become you, says he, to enter into parties, and to glory in any single man, no, not in Paul, Apollos, nor Cephas, *for all things are yours, whether life or death, whether this world or the other, whether things present or things to come, all are yours.*"

To improve this proposition, and to bring it down to some practical purposes, let us consider,

I. What we are to understand by this extensive privilege of true christians, contained in this expression; *All things are yours;* and what is the true limitation of the sense of it.

II. It shall be proved, that notwithstanding the limited sense of these words, yet the saints have a richer treasure in them, than the greatest riches of a sinner.

III. We shall enquire how christians come to possess such a treasure. And,

IV. See what use may be made of this doctrine.

First, What are we to understand by this expression, *All things are yours?* To answer this enquiry clearly, I am constrained to introduce these two negatives.

1. We are not to suppose here that all things are in the possession of true christians, and under their power. This truth every man is a witness of, that the saints have neither heaven nor earth in their present possession. The sun and stars are not at their command, nor the riches of this world in their chests, nor the kingdoms of this world under their government. No, by no means, for they are most times poor and mean in this world, many of them destitute of the common supports of nature, and the comforts of life. Christ himself, their Lord and Master, had not where to lay his head: And the apostles, who were the chief of christians, suffered "hunger and thirst, were naked and buffetted; they had sometimes neither food nor raiment, neither rest nor peace, nor any certain dwelling-place;" 1 *Cor.* iv. 11.

2. And as all things are not in their possession, so neither are we to understand that all things in a civil sense are their right and property. They have not a just claim and demand of the good things which their neighbours possess, nor ought they to take possession of them, though they had power to do it. It is a very wicked principle which has no countenance from scripture, and has been abused to most unrighteous

and bloody purposes, that dominion is founded in grace, or that the saints have a present civil right to all the earth, and the good things of it. From this sort of doctrine, some men of furious zeal and enthusiasm have been tempted to rise and seize on the property of their neighbours. And indeed, all the persecution in the world upon the account of religion, is built on this principle, "that the saints alone have a right to peace and liberty, to honour and money, and all the good things of this life; and that the heretic and the sinner have no right to any thing." And though persecutors are very much ashamed to own this doctrine in words, yet they confirm it, and comment upon it, in all their oppressive and bloody practices.

But the christian religion knows no such principles; it allows every man's property and interest in the goods of this world, whether he be a Turk or a Jew, a heathen or a christian, a saint or a sinner. It is providence has disposed of these outward things in the civil life, and men become entitled to them, by the laws and agreement of civil society: And thus a rich wicked man may be righteously possessed of a fine house, and purple raiment, may have a well-spread table, and large lands, and dominions, while a saint may happen to lie at his door destitute of bread and clothing.

But in what sense then can it be said, that "all things are theirs?"

To give a just answer to this inquiry, we must take notice, that the apostle's first design here, is to show, that believers need not be so fond of assuming to themselves a peculiar interest in one minister or another, for they may enjoy the gifts of all; *all are for their sakes:* And from this single hint he rises high into the privileges of the saints. Not ministers only, as Paul and Cephas, are designed for their benefit; but all are theirs: All things in heaven or earth, in time, or in eternity, are appointed to do some service to them. This therefore I take to be the true sense of my text, *viz.* "That all things in the creation of God, all things in all his vast dominions, which a christian can or shall at any time have to do with, shall as certainly serve to promote his true interest, and his final happiness, as though he himself had sovereign dominion over them, or present possession of them:" Always supposing that the christian maintains his character, and acts in his station becoming the dignity of his holy and heavenly calling.

The plain meaning of the words is, that *all things shall work for the good of the saints.* But the apostle chooses to express this in a noble manner here, and by such an exalted figure of speech as aggrandizes the character of the saints, and raises their dignity: And therefore he represents them as having a property in all things, and speaks sublimely of them, as though they were possessors of heaven and earth.

Now the ground on which he builds this manner of speaking, may be set in a just and easy light. We can properly be said to possess nothing but what turns to our account, what is of some service or advantage to us; and therefore, in the common language of life, we say, concerning a rich covetous man, "he is a poor wretch, he has nothing, because he receives benefit from so small a part of his estate: And in truth, he has no more than he enjoys or uses." Now the true christian reaps the benefit of all things; and God, the great God, the possessor of heaven and earth, makes all things work together for the benefit of his people; and in this sense it is that all things are theirs.

All things shall turn to their advantage, either, 1. for the support and comfort of their temporal life; or, 2. for the beginning and improvement of their spiritual life; or, 3. for their possession and enjoyment of life eternal.

But instead of collecting all the treasures and riches of the saints under these three

general heads, I shall choose rather to make a paraphrase on the whole verse of my text, and thus discover the interest that a christian has in the persons and things of earth and heaven. "*Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours.*"

I. The ministers of the gospel are yours.

Is Paul appointed an apostle, separated to the gospel by the immediate call of Christ? it is for your sakes, O ye Corinthians, that he was chosen and called! Christ had you in his eye, and upon his heart, when he stopped him in the midst of his fury and persecution; when he overwhelmed him with glory, in the road to Damascus; and from a persecutor, made an apostle of him, and a preacher of the cross of Jesus: For he designed then to send him to Corinth, to call you from heathenism, and to save your souls.

Is Paul a man of learning and of bright parts? Is he endowed with profound knowledge of divine mysteries above his brethren? Is he fit to preach for the conversion of the heathen world, and to write the great things of God for the church in all future ages? It is for your sakes, O christians, that he is thus endowed: It is for you, O believers in Great Britain, though you live as it were at the ends of the earth, and in the old age of the world; it is even for you that he was appointed and inspired to write his epistles to Rome, Corinth, and Ephesus, and the rest of the early churches. It is by his writings that you have been enlightened in the mysteries of Christ, and the wonders of the gospel. Almost seventeen hundred years ago was he made the apostle of the gentiles, and that partly for your sakes. Paul himself is yours.

Was Apollos an elegant man, and mighty in the scriptures? It was for you, O primitive christians, that he had the gift of oratory bestowed on him. Has any minister in our age and place of abode a peculiar talent of eloquence, hath he a vivacity of fancy, a strength of expression, a sweet accent, and a commanding voice? It is designed for the conviction and salvation of your souls. Can he thunder like the voice of God on mount Sinai, and flash the terrors of the law, like lightning, upon your consciences? It is to awaken you out of your carnal slumber and security in sin, to make you fly from the wrath to come, and cry out, *What shall I do to be saved?* Can he set the blessings of salvation in a glorious and convincing light? It is to persuade you to accept them. Has he the art of striking the passions, and touching the inward springs of the soul? Can he spread the invitations of grace before you, in alluring language? Can he dissolve his thoughts in the tenderest accents of speech, and moisten his words with his tears? It is all designed as a means, in the hands of the Spirit, to melt your hearts to repentance, and to soften your souls to receive the impressions of the gospel? Has he the holy skill of displaying the glories of our blessed Saviour? Can he set off the miracles of his life? Can he talk of his bleeding and his dying love in the most affecting manner? Can he paint him in the honours of his resurrection, his triumph and his exalted state, in most magnificent colours? It is all for the assistance of your faith, the kindling of your love, and the advancement of your joy. Not Paul only, but Apollos is yours.

Is Cephas or Peter a man of boldness and courage to defend the truths of the gospel, or to speak for Christ amongst infidels? It is to lead you onward as the soldiers of Christ, through the midst of dangers, and to encourage you to face the persecuting world bravely in the profession of the cross.

Or is the character of Cephas, as an instructor of the young, and a condescending preacher to babes? He has this talent given him for your sakes too, to feed you, while you were babes in Christ, with the sincere milk of the word, to set before you the first principles of the oracles of God, and assist you to imbibe the rudiments of christianity, before you were fit to receive the more exalted doctrines, and be fed with stronger meat. Thus not only Paul and Apollos, but Cephas is yours.

All the officers in the church, both ordinary and extraordinary, are appointed for your sakes. It is for you that Christ ascended on high, and gave gifts to men. Read and believe it; Eph. iv. 11, 12. *And he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.*

And as the gifts and graces of the ministers of the gospel are designed for the benefit of the church, so the outward circumstances that attend them, their sorrows, and their joys, are ordained for the advantage of christians: And St. Paul rejoices in it; 2 Cor. i. 3, 4, 6. *Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God: And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which appears to be effectual, when ye endure the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation;* that is, we preach more effectually from our own experience.

Thus whatsoever be the characters, or the talents, or the circumstances of life that attend your ministers, they are ordained of God for some valuable purposes to you.

II. This world is yours. Not only the ministers of the gospel, but the world, and the things of it are yours. It is for your sakes, O believers, that the world stands! For when sin entered into it by Adam, the first man, there was a curse spread over it; and perhaps immediate destruction had attended it, but for the sake of the children of God, who were appointed to be born in successive ages, amongst the posterity of Adam, among the children of men. It is for the sake of the elect, who were given to Christ before the world was, that this earth and these lower heavens are continued in being. This earth abides as a stage of action, proper for a state of trial for the saints; and when the last saint is born, and his state of trial is finished, the world and the works of it shall be burned up together.

It is for you, O christians, that these heavens, or, shall I say, this globe of earth, rolls round in its daily and yearly courses, and the sun and the moon send out their brighter or paler beams, to light you onward in your way to glory. The morning breaks for you to give you day-light, that you may work for God: And the evening spreads its long thick shadows over the nations, to determine a time for your repose and refreshment. The darkness and the light are yours, during your continuance in the flesh. When all your work here is done, these lower *heavens shall be folded up like an old garment, as a vesture they shall be changed;* they shall flee away and be no more.

Survey the trees and the fields, how they bring forth food for you. The beasts of the earth grow and are nourished for your conveniency; they were born and live, and die for your support and nourishment. The winds blow to purge the air for you, and to keep it wholesome, while God has appointed you to breathe in it. The fountains bubble, and the rivers flow to quench your thirst. Flax and wool are ordained for your covering,

and the silk-worm is set to his shining task, that some of your garments may be soft and easy: *The beasts of the earth are at peace with you, and you are in league with the stones of the field;* Job v. 23. O happy and glorious state of the children of God!

Christ, in his providential management of all things in this world, has a chief regard to his own people. The wicked of the earth who dwell among the saints, come in for a share of the common good things of life, chiefly as they are instruments of the providence of Christ, for some known or unknown benefit to his church.

I might tell you also, that if you are christians indeed, then though your ungodly neighbours may have a rightful civil property in many good things of the world, yet you have a better and sweeter interest in the earthly blessings which you possess. You can taste the love of a father in them, and the kindness of a reconciled God. They are common benefits to the world, but they are made as it were special blessings to you. They are put into your hand by a better covenant: They are sanctified to your use: The world itself becomes a means to raise your hearts towards God. And whereas wealth, and honours, and the plenteous enjoyments of life, become a temptation and a snare to the wicked; and, through the corruption of their natures, divide their souls from God and heaven, the same things are made happy instruments in the hand of the Mediator, to furnish you out for eminent service, and to help you onward to a better world.

III. Life and death are yours. Life, with all the comfortable attendants of it, or even with all its difficulties and vexations, it is still designed for your advantage: And death, as terrible as it is in itself, shall appear to be a benefit to you. But I insist no longer on this head at present, because I design it to be the subject of following discourses.

IV. Things present, whether visible or invisible, and things to come, are all yours.

1. Visible things present are yours. I have shewed you in part already, how the wheels of nature are rolling for you. This lower creation stands and moves for your sakes, for your relief and support, while you are travelling to heaven. The present posture of things in this world, the daily scenes of life are continued or changed, and still overruled by divine Providence for your good. Kingdoms, and laws, and governments, are established among men for your safety: If the world were without all government, and all things run into confusion, the saints, with all their earthly comforts, would become the plunder and property of the wicked continually. The princes of the earth, and the political constitutions of nations, are designed to be a screen and defence to the people of God, who dwell among them: For *if these foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?* Psalm xi. 3. *The wicked would bend their bow, and make ready their arrow upon the string;* and they would not only in private, but publicly *shoot at the upright in heart;* verse 2. There would be neither life nor safety for a christian. Yet, on the other hand, when Christ, in the course of his providence, brings confusion on states and kingdoms, and when he suffers the wicked of the earth, like wild beasts of the wilderness, to spoil, devour, and destroy, it is usually designed by his wisdom as a season of proper trial for his own people, and that country becomes a scene of their glorious sufferings. Christ, who is head over all things, sets up and pulls down tyrants or good princes, as may best serve the counsels of his Father's mercy, and his own kind designs for his chosen and redeemed people.

And as the whole world of nature, and the present affairs of nations are managed by

Christ for the good of the church, so the world of grace, and the affairs of his sanctuary, and his kingdoms on earth, are all ordained for the benefit of the saints. Christians, why did he separate you from the world, and call you out of the wilderness, and make you a chosen nation, a peculiar people? Was it not for your advantage? Why did he write his word? Why did he ordain ministers and holy institutions? Was it not for your edification? Were not the seals of the covenant given to assist your faith, by the aid of your senses, and by this means to inflame your love, and exalt your joy? Are not the precepts of the word written to direct you in the way of duty? Are not the threatenings pronounced to awaken your fear, and guard you from sin and folly? And are not all the promises of the gospel given to comfort your souls, to support your spirits, and give a sweet taste of glory before-hand.

Whatsoever temporal circumstances attend you in this present life, whether they are painful or pleasant, they are all the appointments of your heavenly Father for your real interest. Are you at peace in the midst of plenty, and does every thing around you smile upon you? It is that your hearts may be raised to thankfulness, and your lips tuned to praise. Do you labour under pain or sickness? It is to wean you from flesh and blood, to put you in mind, that this tabernacle is falling, to awaken your hearts to insure a better habitation on high. Do you want food or raiment? It is to make you remember that you are in the wilderness, and to call your meditations upward to your Father's house, where there is bread enough, and to spare. Are you scorned and reviled by the basest of men? Are you persecuted, or imprisoned and treated with rudeness or cruelty? It is to try and prove your suffering graces, that your faith, courage, and patience may shine as gold that has passed through the furnace; are you called to seal the truth and testimony of Jesus with your blood? It is to prepare you for the crowns of glory that are laid up for martyrs.

This thought leads me onward in the survey of this rich inventory of a christian, and carries my thoughts into the invisible regions, and into far distant futurities.

2. Not things present only in this visible world, but things invisible in other worlds are also yours, and were appointed for your benefit. These are numbered by the apostle among the riches and possessions of the saints.

Is there a heaven built on high, with many palaces of light in it? They were built and furnished for your reception. It is "the inheritance of the saints in light;" *Col.* i. 12. Are there mansions of unknown glory, well prepared by our Lord Jesus Christ, since his ascent to heaven? He assures us in his last words, that they are prepared for you; John xiv. 2, 3. *In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you, I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.* Each of these mansions stands waiting for those saints, for whom they are provided; and they are all adorned with rich and magnificent furniture, in the perfect beauty of holiness.

The angels, in their shining orders, are ordained to be your attendants: Those holy inhabitants of the upper blessed world, *encamp round about those that fear the Lord;* Psalm xxxiv. 7. and are appointed as guards to his children, by their heavenly Father. *Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation;* Heb. i. 14. They wait upon your dying beds, and convey your souls to the bosom of Abraham? *Luke* xvi. 22. Happy souls, who have so illustrious a guard, so secure a convoy to the far distant and unknown regions of light and joy!

The very hell that is provided to punish impenitent sinners, though we cannot say it was built for you, christians, yet it has been of glorious and terrible service, to awaken your souls out of a natural and guilty state. When the Spirit of God, in the ministry of his word, has opened the mouth of hell, and brought the flashes of that furnace into your face; it has awakened your consciences in time past, and driven you to seek refuge in the arms of Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come. Thus hell itself is constrained to pay a tribute towards the salvation of the saints.

And the devils themselves who dwell there, with all their fiery temptations, have been but as underworkers for our final good; they are as slaves to Christ, the great refiner, who designed to purify your souls by those very methods of temptation, which those evil spirits made use of on purpose to destroy you. Thus the ministers of divine wrath to sinners are become instruments of your benefit. *When Satan has desired to winnow you as wheat, Christ has prayed for you that your faith fail not;* Luke xxii. 31, 32. and he has taken care that by this winnowing you might be purified, that nothing might fly away but the empty chaff; that you might appear in the sight of Christ as purer corn. Now if hell, and the wicked inhabitants of it, may be constrained to serve your interest, and to promote your happiness, surely there is nothing in all the creation, but may turn to your advantage. O divine privilege, when the creatures that are under the deserved curse of God, are thus made to subserve your blessedness!

3. But not only present invisibles, but even all future unseen things are yours too. The morning of the resurrection is appointed for your glory; and the great trumpet is put into the hands of the arch-angel, to awaken your sleeping dust into immortality. Jesus the Lord himself shall descend from heaven to call you from the grave: And *though ye were dead, ye shall hear the voice of the Son of God and live;* John v. 35. The great day of judgment, and all the solemnities of it, are ordained for your honour, to publish your victories over sin and Satan, before the face of the whole creation, to pronounce you openly acquitted and justified before men and angels, to proclaim you the sons and daughters of the Most High God, and determine your state to everlasting blessedness.

Are there crowns of infinite value laid up in heaven? Are there rewards of glory there, immense rewards, and of endless duration? It is to crown your labours, your conflicts, your christian race; it is to reward your sufferings, your patience, and your conquest: And the day of glory is stretched out to all everlasting, that your happiness may know no end. *Thus things present, and things to come are all yours;* and there is nothing in time or eternity, which can come within the reach or notice, but in some of these senses shall subserve your interest, and turn to your advantage. This is the genuine sense, and this the true limitation of these words, *all things are yours.*

The second thing proposed in this discourse, was to prove, that notwithstanding the limited sense of these words, yet the true christian has a richer treasure in them, than all the worldly wealth of the sinner. And without multiplying particulars, the proof of it will sufficiently appear in these four things.

I. The treasure of the meanest saint is vastly more large and extensive, than that of the richest sinner. Let the wicked man point to his heaps of money, and run over the names of his farms and manors, and call himself the lord and master of them all; it is but a narrow and poor survey, that a few pieces of shining earth can give us; or the

fields that lie within the prospect of a mile or two, when compared with this vast and universal treasure, *all things are yours!* It is true, christians, that you have not the civil property and power over the earth, or the heavens; but you receive a divine advantage from all things, and that is more than the sinner can say concerning any one thing that he possesses in the way of civil property.

II. This treasure of the saints is more secure, and more durable, than any thing that a sinner enjoys; therefore the apostle calls the wealth of this world, *uncertain riches, that cannot be trusted in;* 1 Tim. vi. 17. *Riches make to themselves wings, and fly away as an eagle toward heaven;* Prov. xxiii. 5. and leave the owner poor and destitute: Many a wealthy man, who flourished yesterday in abundance of ease and plenty, may be stripped of all to-morrow, and want the common supports of nature. What possessions soever are built upon the foundations of civil property, may be taken away from the saint or the sinner, by robbing and plunder, by cheating and knavery, by inundations of water, or the rage of fire, or by the invasion of a foreign enemy; but the beneficial interest that a christian has in all things, is preserved to him by the covenant of grace. He may be stripped of all earthly possessions, but the loss of his temporal estate shall turn to his real benefit, as well as the possession of it. Losses and crosses, as well as plenty and peace, are numbered among the items of his inventory, and make up his treasure; so that though the outward scenes of things on earth are perpetually changing, his real and everlasting treasure is the same; for all things that appear in nature, that occur in present providence, or shall arise in future ages, shall work for his advantage: He may lose money or lands as well as a sinner; but that very loss shall turn to his gain.

This sort of treasure he cannot be dispossessed of by death itself, for when he quits his visible interest in all things in this lower world, he enters into a new world of spirits, which he has never seen; and yet all things in that world are his too: All things in those unknown regions, where the departing spirit goes, are made over to the saint, by the same covenant as the things of this world; they shall all administer some divine profit to him, and be a part of his happiness in the world to come.

III. This treasure of a christian is ever growing, at least in the possession; for the occurrences of every day make some addition to it; whereas the wealth of sinners is impaired with using. The largest earthly estate may be wasted: Money decreases daily by procuring the supports of life; but a christian's treasure still improves. He lives upon it every day, and yet it grows still.

The providences of God here on earth, present us daily with some new affairs, new occurrences: Whether they be pleasant or painful, still the spiritual man finds his interest in them; and when he reviews his account in the evening, if his heart has been in a proper frame, he may write himself gainer. He has possessed and enjoyed the very crosses and sorrows of his former days: He has treasured up a store of divine experiences, in the midst of plenty and want, health and sickness: New scenes of life arise, new appearances of things; he is still like the bee, ready to suck honey from every flower that blows: He gathers his food and his riches from weeds that are unsavoury, as well as from the blossoms of perfume: If he is by this means adding daily to the number and strength of his graces and virtues, he is, as it were, treasuring up a good foundation for time to come, and, shall I be bold to say, adding beauties and ornaments to his robes of glory, and lustre to his heavenly crown.

IV. This large inheritance of a christian is all sanctified, which is more than can be

said of any part of a sinner's estate. The riches of this world may be abused to luxury and debauchery, to iniquity and sore vexations. They may be abused to profaneness and impiety, to dishonour God, and corrupt the conversation of men, and to ruin their souls for ever: But this large and extensive treasure of a christian is designed for his real happiness, as well as for the honour of his God; whatsoever he has to do with in the world, he uses it to the glory of his God, to the honour of his Saviour, to the benefit of his fellow-creatures, and to his own sublimest advantage. And concerning this sacred treasure, it may be said, that it is the property, or in the possession of a christian, no farther than it is sanctified to him, or than he receives it with a sanctified mind. *To the pure, all things are pure:* Tit. i. 15. for *every thing is sanctified by the word of God and prayer;* 1 Tim. iv. 5. The exercise of piety among the saints, puts a sort of consecration upon all creatures, so far as they use or enjoy them.

Thus it is made sufficiently evident, that the treasure of a saint vastly excels all the richest possessions of a sinner.

I cannot enter now upon the third branch of my design, which was to shew, how a christian comes to be made heir and possessor of all things. Let us therefore shut up the present discourse with this one reflection:

Reflection.—" How unreasonable is it for a christian to forsake his profession, or his practice, for any thing which this world can tempt him with! For his treasures and enjoyments already are greater than any thing he can hope for in the ways of sin.

" What a powerful motive may be drawn hence, to persevere in faith and holiness! Christians, *all things are yours;* every thing you converse with shall turn to your benefit; *this world, and the other, things present and things to come, life and death are yours.*

" What valuable pretences can the world make, to tempt you to lose this inheritance, to quit these hopes, and to part with these possessions? Can you, by complying with any temptation, provide yourself with such riches as these; or with any thing that shall answer the loss of them? Sin and the world can promise you but a little narrow share of good things: The gospel of Christ gives you a most extensive treasure, for it bestows all things upon you. The world can make nothing secure, but the treasures of christianity are everlasting; they reach beyond the grave, into unknown worlds and ages. All the wealth, and pleasures, and enjoyments of this life perish with the using; but your inheritance is ever upon the increase:" As fast as time and providence bring forth days, and seasons, and new scenes, so fast this treasure grows; and you may receive the daily profit of it. What can sin and the world give you but what hath a secret curse in it? These your treasures are sanctified blessings, and the foretastes of them are designed to assist you onward in the ways of holiness and peace, till you arrive at the brightest and sweetest part of them, the full enjoyment of God and happiness in the upper world.

" Go on then, christians, with zeal and courage in the profession of your faith: Go on with constancy in the practice of duty: Feed daily upon that portion of your inheritance, which your heavenly Father appoints to sustain you in your travels homeward; and expect the rest in your Father's house. When the world would tempt you to forego your sacred interest in the gospel, by the alluring offer of any temporal enjoyments, tell the world, that *life and death, things present and things to come; are yours* already: Let the world know that Christ has engaged and secured your heart for ever to himself, by outbidding all that the world can offer; for he has written down and sealed your title to

a larger and richer inheritance, and annexed it to his own: *Ye are joint-heirs with Christ.* And he has appointed it to stand recorded in his holy book to the view of men and angels, that *all things are yours.*"

The Recollection.—"And is it possible that so worthless a creature as I am, should be really entitled to all these blessings? Can it be true, that so rich an interest in the good things of time and eternity belongs to me? To me, who am less than the least of all the mercies of God? To me, who in the days of sin and ignorance have abused all things, O my God, to thy dishonour? To me, who have provoked thy justice to strip me of all the common blessings of nature and life, and to make me for ever poor and miserable? Is the mercy of God so vast and overflowing, as not only to forgive these provocations, and to admit me into his favour, but to bless me also with so rich an inheritance? Fall down prostrate, O my soul, at the foot of sovereign and all-sufficient grace. Remember thy guilt, thy poverty, and thy wretchedness, and be ever humble before God thy infinite benefactor. Mourn over all thy unworthiness, and maintain a constant temper of penitent love, and self-abasing gratitude. I deserve to be cut off for ever, O Lord, from thy house, from thy family, and from all the blessings of thy children: But thou hast called me to the knowledge of thy Son Jesus, thou hast taught me to lay hold on the arm of thy salvation, thou hast made me willing in the day of thy power to renounce every sin, to subject myself to thy sceptre of righteousness, and to accept the grace of thy gospel. Thou hast opened the treasures of thy love, treasures that contain in them the good things of earth and heaven, things visible and invisible, things present and things to come: And while these treasures stood open to my view, in the voice of thy gospel thou hast told me, *All is yours.*

"O for an enlarged exercise of faith, to survey this inheritance! to rejoice in this extensive bounty of the Most High! to read the blessed language of this text, and to believe it with a humble claim and appropriation! Surely here is enough for faith to live upon, through all the remaining years of my pilgrimage, and my hope, till faith shall be turned into perfect sight, and hope into full and final enjoyment. I would not change my portion with the richest sinner on earth: My estate is larger, and my interests are more extensive. His gold and silver, his houses and lands, can reach no farther than this world and time; but my inheritance runs into eternity, and my enjoyment of it has no period.

"My treasures are secure against all the invasions and plunder of enemies, against all the rage of the winds, and waves, and fire; against all the confusions of the world, against all the overwhelming changes of time and nature; even against death itself, and the last conflagration. These lower heavens may be dissolved, the elements may melt with fervent heat, and the earth, and the works thereof, with all the fields, and the palaces, and the treasure of it, may be burned up, but my inheritance stands ever secure, for God himself, who is the original Creator and possessor of all things, has secured life and happiness to me in his covenant: He has secured a possession of every thing that can be necessary to my happiness, or to my eternal life.

"O that I were taught to enjoy these blessings daily! and to observe the daily accessions that are made to my treasures, by all the new scenes of providence that are ever rising! May I be instructed to make a sanctified improvement of them all, and thus add something hourly to my best interest, to my everlasting hope! May life itself,

with all the daily comforts and crosses of it, minister to me some sacred meditations, some holy and heavenly thoughts! May a divine consecration come down on all my affairs and concerns in this present state! and by a wise improvement of all those parcels of my inheritance, which my heavenly Father puts into my hands here on earth, may I be trained up and grow fitter daily for those brighter talents, those more glorious enjoyments, which he keeps in reserve for me, when time shall be no more!" *Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMON XXXVII.

A CHRISTIAN'S TREASURE:—ALL THINGS ARE YOURS, WHETHER PAUL, OR APOLLOS, OR CEPHAS, &c.

I.

HOW vast the treasure we possess!
How rich thy bounty, King of grace!
This world is ours, and worlds to come:
Earth is our lodge, and heav'n our home.

II.

Paul is our teacher: while he speaks,
The shadows flee, the morning breaks;
His words like beams of knowledge shine,
And fill our souls with light divine.

III.

Cephas is ours: he makes us feel
The kindlings of celestial zeal:
While sweet Apollos' charming voice
Gives us a taste of heav'nly joys.

IV.

The springing corn, the stately wood,
Grow to provide us house and food:
Fire, air, earth, water, join their force;
All nature serves us in her course.

V.

The sun rolls round to make our day,
The moon directs our nightly way;
While angels bear us in their arms,
And shield us from ten thousand harms.

VI.

O glorious portion of the saints!
Let faith suppress our sore complaints,
And tune our hearts and tongues to sing
Our bounteous God, our sovereign king.

SERMON XXXVIII.

THE CHRISTIAN'S TREASURE.

1 COR. iii. 21.

ALL THINGS ARE YOURS.

THERE is nothing that a wise man can wish for in order to make him happy, but the gospel proposes it to encourage the faith and practice of christians. What honour is there to be enjoyed among the sons of men, that is wont to gratify our ambition, but the gospel assures us of higher honours than this, when it makes us the sons of God? What pleasures are there to be tasted in the satisfaction of animal nature, but the gospel invites us to more refined, and more lasting pleasures, which are to be derived from the love of God, and the company of our Saviour with all his saints? What riches can be possessed or desired by the most covetous mind, but the gospel proposes a far more extensive, a more durable, and more useful treasure, when it tells us in the words of my text, *all things are yours?*

The former discourse has made it appear in what sense these words are to be understood: Not that we have a present possession of all things, a power over them, or a civil right to seize and enjoy them; but the meaning is this, that so far as a christian can have any thing to do with the things of this world, or of another, things present or to come, they shall all be made to work together for his real good.

It has been also proved in the second place, that this inheritance of the saints is incomparably richer, and more valuable than any thing which sinners can possess. I proceed now to the

Third general proposed, and that is, to enquire how christians come to be partakers of so fair and rich a treasure.

I. It is the kind and eternal purpose of God their Father, that it should be so. Christians, God has created all things in the world of nature with this design, that you should derive some benefit from them, as far as they can come within your reach or notice, your service or use: He appointed all things in the counsels of his providence, to bear some blessing for you. He has ordained all things in his kingdom of grace for your advantage; and there are unknown regions of light and glory which he has provided for you. His elect were ever nearest to his heart, next to the man Christ Jesus, next to his only-begotten Son; *for they were all chosen in him before the foundation of the world;* Eph. i. 4. Whether creation or providence, whether nature, grace or glory, *all things are for your sakes;* 2 Cor. iv. 15.

I would caution you again, that you are not to understand it in such an incredible sense, as though God made every particular creature in the upper and the lower worlds, only to give the possession of them to the saints, or that he manages all his providential kingdom, merely for the sake of his own people without any other view. No, this is

stretching the words into an extent too large and unreasonable; for there are millions of creatures, millions of plants and animals in earth and sea, that are born, and grow, and live, and die again, which the saints of God never saw, nor know, nor shall know: nor can they receive any immediate benefit from them. But the meaning is this, that all things whatsoever the saints can or shall have to do with in this or other worlds, were intended to yield some profit to them, and especially while they maintain their character as the children of God, and walk as becomes their dignity and their profession. In all God's general counsels of creation, and providence, and grace, he kept his eye, as I may say, still upon his saints: He designed their good in ten thousand instances, in his great and glorious works, and resolved that nothing in all his kingdoms should interfere with their last and best interest.

Though what he has written down in the book of his decrees, is read only at large by his Son Christ Jesus, yet he has written out a sweet abstract of it in the book of his promises, that the saints on earth might read and know it; Rom. viii. 28. *And we know that all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.* It was for their sakes the promises were written, that they might have not only a present relish of divine blessings, but a sweet foretaste of joys long to come. The blessings of the children of God were numbered up, and written down originally for them, in the book of God's everlasting counsels; and in the book of his word has he copied out for them, the blessings of heaven from above, and of the deep from beneath; the precious things brought forth by the sun, and under the influence of the moon; the chief things of the ancient mountains on earth, so far as is needful for them here, and the precious things of the everlasting hills of paradise hereafter.

Does the great Creator and Lord of all keep the wheels of nature in their settled courses? It is for his people's good. *The stars in their courses shall fight for Israel:* Or does he countermand nature in any of its motions, and bid the *sun stand still in Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon?* It is that the armies of his people may have long day-light, to subdue their enemies. Hail-stones and thunder shall break out of the clouds to destroy the Canaanites, when Israel is at war with them: But if Israel want bread in the wilderness, the clouds shall drop down manna, and give them bread from heaven. The Lord gave up Egypt with her armies to the waves of the Red-sea, for the ransom and redemption of his people: He gave Ethiopia and Seba to the sword for the safety of his servant Jacob. Isaiah xliii. 4. *I have loved thee, O Israel, therefore I gave men for thee, and people for thy life.* And it is no wonder that God has given all things to his children, since he has given himself to them, and told them, *I am your God:* It is no wonder he has bestowed all other things upon them, since he has bestowed his Son upon them: His own, his only Son, who is dearer to him than all the creation; Rom. viii. 32. *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

II. The saints have an interest in all things, for Christ is made Lord over all things for his people's good; Eph. i. 22. *God hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to his church.* Thus the names of the saints are, as it were, inserted into that divine patent that exalts and constitutes Christ Lord of all.

And indeed, Christ has not only a right to all things by the mere donation of the Father, but it may be said, he has purchased all things for his own honour, and his

people's good. *Because he was obedient unto death, therefore God has so highly exalted him;* Phil. ii. 8. *and made him Lord of the dead and the living;* Rom. xiv. 9. And perhaps it is in this sense, that the inheritance of the saints may be called *the purchased possession;* Eph. i. 14.

Now, christians, since all the affairs of nature, grace, and glory, are put into the hands of such a friend in trust for you, that they may be managed and employed for your advantage, it is as well, nay, it is much better than if all things were at present in your possession, that is, under your present state of weakness and folly; for his wisdom and goodness shall govern all for your truest interest. Ye are Christ's, so the apostle expresses it in the verse next to my text. And Christ, who has all in his hands, will take care of you who are his own.

Christ is made heir of all things; Heb. i. 2. And if ye belong to Christ, *then are ye heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ;* Rom. viii. 17. And the express promise of the Father confirms it, that all things are yours; Rev. xxi. 7. *He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son;* 1 Cor. xii. 27. *Ye are the members of the body, and Christ is the head.* Now the members must in their measure become sharers of what the head possesses. In your proportion, O christians, you shall have communion with Christ your Lord, in his royalties and his wide dominion; for he hath promised that *ye shall sit down on his throne, when ye have overcome your enemies, even as he overcame, and is set down on the throne with his Father;* Rev. iii. 21. Ye are one with Christ, and therefore in your measure, O believers, and according to your capacity, ye shall possess and enjoy all things which he possesses, so far as is requisite for your benefit in this world, and your truest happiness for ever.

III. The saints are actually invested with this privilege, by believing on the Son of God, by accepting the covenant of his grace, by receiving Christ Jesus the Saviour, according to the appointed methods of the gospel. When a poor, destitute, guilty, and perishing creature is made willing by divine grace, to give up himself to Christ as his Saviour and his Lord, he is divested of his guilt, he is clothed with the robes of salvation, he is translated out of a state of sin, poverty, and wretchedness, into a state of rich grace, and becomes a child of God, and an heir of all things. A living faith which has all the springs of holiness in it, is ordained to carry in it all the springs of treasure and felicity. This unites the soul to Christ, this gives a humble claim to all the blessings laid up in the eternal decrees and purposes of God; blessings purchased by the blood of his Son Jesus; blessings promised in the word of the gospel, wherein all things are given for a possession to the children of the Most High.

IV. All things may be said to belong to the saints, or shall turn to their advantage, because the blessed Spirit is given them, to teach them to improve all things for their own benefit; 1 Cor. ii. 12. *We have received—the Spirit, which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God:* And that not only that christians might know what their treasures are, but learn how to make a right use of them too. They are taught by the Holy Spirit, to receive the common blessings of nature from the hands of God, as a Father and a Friend, and a God in covenant: And they rejoice in them as such, with humble thankfulness; they are instructed to derive useful meditations from the sun, moon, and stars; and to read the wisdom, the power, and the glory of their Creator and their Father there, and to rejoice in his goodness. The peaceful state of kingdoms, or battles, wars and earthquakes, and the convulsion of nations, are

all made useful lessons to a child of God; and he gains something from all of them, by the teachings of the blessed Spirit.

The saints are led into an acquaintance with the word of God by the same Spirit too: They receive the promises and directions of the gospel, through the influences of this Spirit. They derive light, holiness and comfort from every part of the book of God; that is, from the law and the prophets, the histories and the epistles, and from all the ordinances of the sanctuary: He teaches them to borrow some food and delight from Moses and David, as well as from Peter and John. He leads them through the sweet fields of gospel grace, and directs them to gather many a flower there for their refreshment, and to feed on the fruit of the tree of life for their support. He shews them how to profit by the ministry of a Paul, and to learn the deep mysteries of Christ: He impresses on their souls the warm and pathetic words of an Apollos, and fires their hearts thereby with zeal and love: He teaches his younger disciples over again the first lessons of grace, which a Cephas had just taught them. Thus Paul and Apollos, and Cephas are theirs.

He instructs them how to converse with things invisible and future by faith, and to make use of the unseen and distant glories of eternity for their present comfort and joy. *It is the God of hope, who by his Spirit fills them with all peace and joy in believing;* Rom. xv. 13. And I might add also, that the holy Spirit is given them, and dwells in them as an earnest of their inheritance of all things; 2 *Cor.* v. 6. till the redemption of this *purchased possession*, that is, till it shall be redeemed, and freed from all the present incumbrances of sin and Satan; *Eph.* i. 13, 14. Then in a happy hour shall this purchased possession be disclosed in the fairest light, and proclaimed to be the property of the saints.

To sum up all in a few words, a christian's interest in all things is well founded, and well confirmed. They are his by the original purpose of God the Father, when he created all things; it was his design that his chosen people should receive benefit from them. They are his by the appointment of divine providence, that all things shall work together for his good. They are his; for Christ the Son of God has purchased a dominion over all things, that he may manage them for the service of his redeemed ones. They are his, because the Spirit teaches him to derive some advantage from all things by faith and holy meditation. God has given himself to the saints as their portion for ever: He has given his own Son for them as a ransom from death; he has given his Spirit to them, as the principle of their life: And in this view, we may rise in the language of faith, and say in the words of the blessed apostle, *how shall he not herewith freely give us all things;* Rom. viii. 32.

Thus having made it appear in what sense all things are yours, and upon what foundations this glorious privilege is built, I proceed in the

Last place, to consider what use may be made of this discourse.

First Use. It affords a word of mourning and terror to obstinate and impenitent sinners. Are all things made beneficial to the saints? Think with yourselves then what you lose, because you are not of that number. If you live and die in this sinful state, you have a comfortable interest in nothing: Nothing works for your real benefit. Your abuse of all things that you have any thing to do with, takes away the true pleasure and enjoyment of what you possess, and turns them into a curse to you instead of a blessing. *Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or this world, or life or death, or things present, or things to come,* nothing is yours; *for ye are not Christ's.* And ye shall reap no final

and lasting advantage from any thing, if you persist in a sinful and impenitent state; for ye are without God in the world, without Christ, and without hope.

Do you sit under the ministry of Paul, who spreads the glorious light of the gospel around you? But the god of this world hath blinded your minds, that this divine light should not reach them: Even the preaching of Paul is a savour of death unto you, if you live and die without the faith and love of Christ. Do you hear the zealous and pathetic language of Apollos? But your heart perhaps grows the harder under it: You resist the affectionate entreaties of the gospel, from the lips of that eloquent preacher. And even Apollos, whose soul is wont to melt with compassion for perishing sinners, shall rise up in judgment against you. And as for the plain and condescending ministry of Cephas, you despise the man and his sermons together; therefore you can get no benefit by them. Neither Paul, nor Apollos, nor Cephas is yours.

Well, if spiritual things are not yours, you hope, however, that you have a property in things temporal: If the blessings of the church do not belong to you, yet you claim a good share in this world, and the blessings of it: You feed deliciously, you are dressed in gay colours and gold, and you have wealth laid up in store for many years to come. Poor vain creatures! What is all your treasure? What is your property in it? A sorry property in lands, and a large estate, when not a clod of the earth, nor a penny of the money shall turn to your real and lasting benefit! I grant that you possess some of the good things of this world indeed. But your riches and plenty are not real and proper blessings, while you are afar from Christ, and strangers to him: Your own unbelief and impenitence, and rebellion against God, turn all the comforts of the world into curses: It is only the grace of Christ can take off the curse, and sanctify this world into a blessing.

Life is not yours; it is not for your final advantage, while you waste it in vanity and sinful amusements: A long life spent in this manner, shall but add to your guilt, and aggravate your condemnation.

Death is not a benefit, but a dreadful hour to you, for it delivers you over to the full power of Satan, that cruel tormentor, and opens the scene of your everlasting sorrows.

Things present are not blessings to you, while you resolve to continue in this sinful state. You abuse the day-light, and waste it in trifles or in crimes; or at best you spend it in an eager pursuit of the things of the world, with the neglect of God. The night is given to recruit nature for new services, but you seize the shadows of the evening to make a screen for your secret iniquities, and hide your sins behind the curtains of midnight.

You feed on the fruits of the earth, and other rich provisions of divine bounty; but perhaps you make them instruments of shameful intemperance: Or at best you lay out the strength of them in empty follies, or in low earthly designs, without a thought of God or heaven. The morning and the evening wait upon you in long successions, but you are heaping up iniquities from morning to evening. You walk daily in the paths of death, and the sun-beams do but light you onward to everlasting darkness. You are nourished by your food for the day of slaughter. Daily and hourly you abuse the goodness of God, and even these abused blessings of his goodness shall call for greater degrees of vengeance at his awful judgment-seat. Thus neither the light of the sun, nor the fruits of the earth, neither day nor night, are yours; for you abuse them to sinful purposes, and they yield you no real profit.

And if things present are not yours, if ye have no solid and lasting benefit by them, much less can you pretend to claim any comfortable share in the things that are to come,

There is a heaven of happiness provided for the saints, but you are utterly unprepared to fulfil the business of it, or to taste the blessedness. There is no room nor place there for you. There is nothing glorious and delightful among all the promises of God, or all the joyful scenes of the world to come, that you can claim any title to, nor have you any interest in them. When hell shall open its mouth indeed, to receive millions of the damned, according to the final sentence of the Judge, there you will find a place and room provided for you; but it is an uneasy and dreadful one. Hell is yours, the vengeance of God is yours, endless misery is yours; you have been treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath; and you can claim nothing but this painful portion, this dismal and everlasting inheritance.

And can you be content with such a portion as this is, while the saints are inheritors of all that is holy and happy, both in this world and the next? O may your busy thoughts be awakened betimes, and make you ever restless and uneasy in your present wretched estate! Return to the Lord in humble mourning, for all your past iniquities: Return to God speedily, from whom you have wickedly departed: Loathe yourselves because of your abominations, and abandon every idol: *Say to him, my Father, in the spirit of faith and penitence, and he will put you among the children, and give you a goodly heritage;* Jer. iii. 19.

Seek acquaintance with Jesus the Son of God, the Saviour, the Lord and Heir of all things; commit your souls to his hands, resign yourselves entirely to his grace, that he may change your unholy natures by his Spirit, that he may cleanse away your guilt by the blood of his atonement, that he may give you an interest in his own riches; then the covenant of his love shall sanctify to you all the enjoyments of earth and time, and make you possessors of all the good things in heaven and eternity.

Second Use.—This doctrine discovers to us the glory of the new covenant. A blessed covenant indeed that has given so rich a treasure to creatures so unworthy! We are sinners, and deserve nothing, yet when we believe in the Son of God, the gospel gives us in our measure the inheritance and possession of all things.

Adam was made lord of this lower world; this earth and the creatures that dwell on it were put into his hands, all things below were given him for his use, his support, and his delight. Thus mankind, considered in the first Adam, in his innocent estate, were lords of all. But *by one man sin entered into the world;* Rom. v. 12. and by that sin, Adam has forfeited his sovereignty and dominion, with all his large possession of the creatures, both for himself and for us. When the sentence came forth from the mouth of God, *Cursed be the ground for thy sake,* Gen. iii. 17. the curse fell on all this lower world, and did, as it were, make a seizure of the creatures out of the hands of Adam the great sinner. They are no more his in that sanctified manner for his real and final benefit, as they were before: They now become instruments of temptation and sin, pain, and sorrow and misery. But the covenant of grace restores all back again to us in and by the second Adam, who is the Lord of the new world, and under this character, is possessor of all things: And a sanctified use of all things is given to us again, in and by Christ Jesus. O glorious covenant, that can take away the curse from creatures, and make them become a blessing to the saints!

But there is a further glory in it still; for our possession of all things in the second Adam, is far more secure than it was in the first. This rich and extensive treasure is put into the hands of Christ our Mediator, our Head, and our Surety for us, that we

may not abuse our possession by sin to our own ruin; and that we may not forfeit our inheritance the second time, and so lose it for ever.

Third Use. This doctrine yields sweet consolation to a poor afflicted saint, who is taught to make a right improvement of it. The gospel should teach a christian in these circumstances, such divine language as this: "Am I poor and despised by the great and rich in this world? yet I trust I am made a child of God by his renewing grace, and the promise gives me a right to all things. God my Father has engaged that all things shall work together for my good. He has made me a joint-heir with his best beloved Son Jesus, and has given me a fair and large inheritance. I shall be possessor of every comfort among the creatures that is necessary to my supreme interest, and my final happiness, and God himself is my eternal portion.

"What if I cannot read my name and my title to lands and houses, to green fields and palaces, in large conveyances and writings under the seal of men? but I can read my name as a christian in the covenant of grace, under the seal of God, and the blood of his Son, and there I find that all things are mine. While I survey the gardens of a rich sinner, every herb and flower there gives me more sweetness than he can find in them all: For I can converse with God my Maker, and my Father, in every herb, and every flower. While I walk amongst the trees of my neighbour's fields, they yield me their refreshing shade, and compose my thoughts to divine meditation. I can lift up my eyes to the stately building where my neighbour dwells, and raise my thoughts thence to the mansions of glory: Then I rejoice to think how much my inheritance and my mansion there exceeds the most magnificent structure on earth. Thus his fields, and his gardens, and his stately dwelling, afford a divine light to me, which perhaps the earthly possessor of them knows nothing of: And though I have almost nothing that I can call my own on earth, yet, in this sense, *I possess all things.* My God hath given me so much of the good things of this world, as he saw needful and proper for my real interest: and surely if I might have had all things within my immediate reach, and under my sovereignty, I would not lay hold of more of them (if I were truly wise) than would promote my welfare.

"Do I sit at the footstool of the rich in the house of God; or am I but a door-keeper in the sanctuary? Yet I can there hear Paul declare the sublime mysteries of the gospel, and while he reveals the wonders of God's eternal love, my heart within me believes, and adores, and rejoices. Apollos entertains me with most affectionate discourses of the grace of Christ and his glory; my faith rises high, my love is kindled to him whom my eyes have not seen; I believe in him, I love him, and my joy grows almost unspeakable. I remember the former instructions of Cephas, who taught me the first principles of this divine religion; and I take pleasure in those sacred foundations. Blessed be God, they are unshaken, and my faith and hope, which were begun under his ministry, stand for ever firm. Paul, and Apollos, and Cephas are mine.

"It has pleased my heavenly Father indeed, to lay many sorrows upon me in this wilderness; but I have learned to think and speak like a christian, and say, Though I appear *as dying, yet behold I live;* though I am *chastened,* yet I am *not killed:* Every stroke of his rod is given by the hand of his love. His rod, like the rod of Aaron, blossoms with divine blessings, and brings forth holy fruit. These very sorrows are sanctified to make me partaker of his holiness. These wounds that I feel, let out the blood of pride, and cure the distempers of my soul. Thus the very sufferings of nature, and the sorrows of life are mine; I have learned to reckon my afflictions among my

blessings; they work for my profit. Whether peace or pain, all are mine. Besides, I solace myself in the midst of my poverty and distress, with this sweet meditation, that the less I enjoy of temporal comforts, and the delights of this world, if I improve my sufferings and sorrows well, there is the more joy and glory laid up for me in the world to come." *My light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are working for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;* 2 Cor. iv. 17.

Is my life on earth stretched out to a tiresome age? Heaven will be much the sweeter; and after many toils I shall have the stronger relish of an eternal rest. Or does death make haste toward me in younger years, and bring my body quickly down to the dust; My soul then is but dismissed the sooner to the building on high that is prepared for me; for whether life or death, all are mine.

When I cast my eyes around, and survey the present frame of things, the sun in his daily circuit, and the moon and stars in their nightly courses, my faith assures me they are all employed in rolling the months and hours away, that stand between me and immortal happiness: And when the morning of the resurrection dawns upon the earth, the gospel tells me, that I have a share in all the rising glories of that day. Should the heavens and the earth be shortly set on fire, if I have but my faith awake within me, I shall have no fear nor surprize; I myself, and all my best interests, are out of the reach of these flames; my treasures are of an unperishing kind. The period of all things here below shall but usher in my brightest hours, and begin the years of my eternal pleasure; for the book of God assures me, that things present and things to come are mine. Make haste then, all ye remaining revolutions of nature; and days, and months, and ages make haste: Time cannot fly too fast for me, who have such an eternity in view. My Lord hath told me in his word, *surely I come quickly*, and my heart echoes to that voice of my beloved, *Amen, even so come Lord Jesus.*

Fourth Use. This doctrine requires the believer to be found in the constant exercise of faith, that so he may be able always to survey his inheritance, and take solid delight in it. Otherwise, when he sustains loss in temporal things, and sickness and trouble attend him in the flesh, he will be ready to judge by the mere principles of sense, and to think his comforts all gone, and that he has nothing left. It is faith alone can teach a believer to rejoice in this treasure given him by the covenant of grace, when the world has taken almost all sensible comforts from him. The natural man with an eye of sense looks on things just as the eye of a brute-animal beholds them, and sees nothing more than according to the common impressions they make on flesh and blood: But the eye of faith is aided by the divine glass of the covenant, which as a microscope, discovers many beauties, where the natural eye, unassisted, can see nothing but roughness and deformity.

It is nothing but faith fixing its eye on sanctified losses and crosses, sanctified pains, and sickness, and distresses, that can enable us to reckon these among our treasures. It is nothing but the spirit of faith that can instruct us to think ourselves rich, because we are heirs of the kingdom, while we are poor and destitute in this lower world; *James* ii. 5. It is the spirit of faith that taught the apostle Paul to triumph under all his infirmities, in such language as this; *As dying, and behold we live; as sorrowful, and yet alway rejoicing; as poor, and yet making many rich, as having nothing*, and *yet possessing all things;* 2 Cor. vi. 9, 10. And if we have the same spirit of faith we may believe and speak the same language.

Fifth Use. This doctrine forbids all murmuring at the hand of God, though his dis-

pensations may have something painful and severe in them. He has given us all things indeed, by the promise of the gospel, but he has not put this treasure into our own hands, lest we should abuse and forfeit it; but he has put it into the hands of Christ for us; and it is Christ our Lord who distributes out such parcels and portions of our estate to us daily, as his perfect wisdom sees most proper to promote our real interest.

The christian under sickness, perhaps will say, Is not life and health writ down in the inventory of my inheritance? Yes, but sickness and death are written down there too, and thy Saviour knows that sickness is better for thee at this season than health. Do not murmur at his hand, for God the Father has entrusted him to manage and govern all his own vast dominions; and canst not thou entrust him to manage thy estate, to dispose of thy concerns, and to allot thy daily portion to thee?

The saint surrounded with distress and poverty, or naked, and hungry, will say, Is not food, and raiment, and peace, specified in the articles of the covenant, and numbered among my treasures? Yes, but poverty, and hunger, and cold, and nakedness are there also: And thy heavenly Father sees it best to withhold peace and plenty from thee at present, or to give thee thy food and raiment but in a scanty measure, to mortify thy flesh, to humble thy pride, to wean thee from the creatures, to teach thee immediate dependance on himself, and to fit thee for a departure to the heavenly world.

When thou art deprived therefore of one earthly comfort after another, and the remaining good things of this life seem to be leaving thee, have a care of murmuring against thy God. Dare not take up the words of Jacob, and say, *Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and will ye take Benjamin also? Surely all these things are against me;* Gen. xlii. 36. But Jacob was made to know, by sweet experience, that all these things wrought for his real advantage, and were made the means of preserving himself and his family too in a day of spreading famine and desolation.

Sixth Use. This doctrine forbids all contention and envy at our fellow-creatures, as well as repining against God.

Is my brother healthy and strong, while I am sick and feeble, and languishing? Does my brother possess more of the good things of this life than I do? It is because our common Father sees it proper to keep me shorter, and to withhold so full an allowance from me. I have an interest in the same large inheritance; I am a child of the same family; and therefore all things are mine as well as his: But I have committed it entirely to the wisdom and goodness of our heavenly Father, to put into my hands what part he pleases of my large inheritance. He is wisest, and will distribute the several portions that he sees fittest for his children, and for this reason I cannot envy my brother. It is the same kind and faithful hand that weighs and measures out my grains and scruples, and little handfuls of earthly blessings, that gives my brother his loads and his full barns.

Has the ministry of Paul been blessed to me, and not that of Apollos? Have the labours of Apollos been more blessed to my fellow-christian, or the plain and familiar instructions of Cephas? Well, I will never make any parties in the church upon this account; for all the ministers of the gospel are appointed for our edification; and I will rejoice in them all, and bless God for the service they do the family of Christ. If my portion of spiritual food be distributed to me by the hands of Paul, it is our common Father that conveys the same sacred food to another, by the hands of Cephas or Apollos; and the world shall never hear me say, "I am of Paul, in opposition to Apollos or Peter;" though I must confess, God has blessed his ministrations most eminently to my soul.

Seventh Use. Has God given all things to the saints by the covenant of grace? Surely then they should return all things back again to him, in a way of gratitude, duty and service. Has he promised to make every thing which we have to do with, concur to promote our best interest, and our final happiness? Let us then apply ourselves with zeal and diligence, to make every thing within our reach subserve his divine interests, and the glory of his kingdom.

Has my gracious God withheld nothing from me, but together with his own Son given me all things, why then should I withhold any thing from him? Why should I not devote my heart, my head, my hands, my whole self, and all things that are within my power, to the honour of his name? Does God bestow life or health or riches upon such a worthless creature as I am? Let holiness to the Lord be written upon them all. And if my fellow-creatures are poor, needy, cold, and starving, let me cheerfully minister to them of my substance which the great Lord of heaven and earth has so richly bestowed on me. My God honours me indeed, when he makes me the dispenser of his blessings among his creatures, and especially among his saints. I lose nothing by this benevolence, but am rather enriched by this very distribution. I become rich in good works, and rich in divine promises: "He that gives to the poor lendeth to the Lord, and he will repay him." Alms are as money laid out to the best interest, and are a growing treasure.

But should I hope for no new beneficial return of all my kindness to men, the very benefits received of God my Father constrain me to this bounty. Has he given all things to a poor worthless creature, and shall I give nothing to the poor, or to the unworthy? Shall I not rather imitate the profuse bounty of my God, who commands *his sun to shine and his rain to descend, both on the evil and the good.* It is a divine excellence to love and to distribute as God does.

The name of Jesus my Saviour has yet a further power to oblige me to use all my earthly possessions for his honour. Has Christ Jesus purchased this large and fair inheritance for me with his blood, has he given me much on earth, and the hopes of greater treasures in heaven, then I will be my own no longer, but give my whole self up to him, with all my powers, and talents, and possessions! They are thine, blessed Saviour, they are thine for ever. It is the solemn and deliberate wish of my heart, that I may never possess or enjoy any thing from which Christ has no revenue of glory. O that his grace may enable me to employ things present for this holy purpose! And when I arrive at the actual possession of things to come, they shall be improved in an unknown but a nobler manner, for the everlasting glory of my God, my Father, and my Saviour.

The Recollection of the doctrinal part.—"In this discourse, O my soul, thou hast not only been called to survey the riches of thy inheritance, but thou hast learned also, in what manner this inheritance is made over to thee, if thou art a sincere christian, and a believer on the Son of God.

"Look backward, my soul, to eternal ages, before the world began, when God marked out the bounds of this creation, and the limits of these heavens, and this earth, he designed them with all their treasures, for the service of his holy ones, for the benefit of his children, angels and men; and thy name and thy share was written down amongst them. The great God, in those early days of his eternity, has provided a rich sufficiency for thy present and future blessedness. O may my faith take this delightful and distant retrospect, and rejoice in God's eternal love!

"God has given all things into the hands of his own Son Jesus, whom he hath or-

dained Lord of all, that he might govern and dispose of all things for the good of his people. Christ is risen from the dead, and hath taken possession of all the blessings of grace and glory, in the name of his saints, that he may make them possessors in their season, and according to their measure: That he may make thee, O my soul, a rich possessor of so fair an inheritance; and that he may keep every part of it secure for thee, till in succession of times and seasons, both in earth and in heaven, thou art fit to receive and enjoy it. If thou art made a joint-heir with Christ, thou art heir of all things.

"But remember, it is a living faith in Christ that must intitle thee to this rich inheritance. It is of infinite importance then, to search often and enquire, Am I a christian indeed? A sincere convert, a believer in Jesus? And does my faith evidence itself in all the fruits of repentance, love, and holiness? O may I feel my soul to live daily this divine life by the faith of the Son of God, that I may maintain a humble claim to these treasures of mercy laid up in the gospel, treasures committed to the hands of Christ to be kept safe for me.

"And may the blessed Spirit instruct me daily to improve all things to my spiritual and eternal benefit, that I may not be like a fool, who has a prize put into his right hand, and knows not how to make use of it! May I be taught to draw some sacred advantage, some holy delight and refreshment from the continual new scenes and occurrences of life! May I derive knowledge, and love, and heavenly sweetness from the surprizing works of God, as the God of nature, and from the more surprizing wonders of his grace! May I learn something divine and holy from all the transactions of his providence, and the various turns and changes of this present state, till I am prepared and *made meet for* a more fit and ample possession of *the* everlasting *inheritance of the saints in light!* Amen.

HYMN FOR SERMON XXXVIII.

ALL THINGS WORKING TOGETHER FOR GOOD.

I.

MY soul, survey thy happiness,
If thou art found a child of grace,
How richly is the gospel stor'd!
What joy the promises afford!

II.

"All things are ours;" the gift of God,
And purchas'd with our Saviour's blood,
While the good Spirit shews us how
To use and to enjoy them too.

III.

If peace and plenty crown my days,
They help me, Lord, to speak thy praise:
If bread of sorrows be my food,
Those sorrows work my real good;

IV.

I would not change my bless'd estate
With all that flesh call rich or great;
And while my faith can keep her hold,
I envy not the sinners gold.

V.

Father I wait thy daily will,
Thou shalt divide my portion still:
Grant me on earth what seems thee best,
Till death and heav'n reveal the rest.

SERMON XXXIX.

THE RIGHT IMPROVEMENT OF LIFE.

1 COR. iii. 22.

WHETHER LIFE OR DEATH—ALL ARE YOURS.

IT is a large and fair inheritance that belongs to the children of God. They have no need to divide themselves into little parties, and to quarrel about their particular interest in one minister or another, in one blessing or another; for whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, whether life or death, all things are theirs.

My former discourses have explained in what sense christians possess all things, and that is, that all things present or to come, that can any way affect or concern them, shall certainly turn to their benefit, and subserve their great and final interest. I proceed now more particularly to enlarge on the words, which I had chiefly in my design, *whether life or death all are yours.*

The first doctrine arising from the words is this: "Life itself, and the continuance of it to the saints, is for their advantage." Now to improve this proposition to practical purposes, I shall do these things:

I. I shall make it appear, under a variety of instances, that life is designed for the benefit of christians.

II. I would amplify and confirm the doctrine yet further, by discovering what a variety of graces may be exercised on earth, which can have no place in heaven; and make it appear that, in some respects, a saint below hath advantage above the saints that are on high.

III. I shall answer a considerable objection or two that seems to rise against the doctrine, while I am treating of it: And, at last, some inferences will be drawn from the whole discourse.

First, Let me shew wherein life appears to be a benefit to true believers. *Life is yours,* O christians, for

I. This is the time that was given you for your reconciliation to God, and securing your everlasting interest. All the elect of God are born into this world sinful and miserable, by their relation to the first Adam, therefore St. Paul seems to include himself, as well as the heathen infidels, when he speaks of the iniquity of their nature, and the guilt of their state. Eph. ii. 2. *We all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath even as others.* Now this life is the time given to seek deliverance from the wrath to come, to fly to the hope that is set before us; *now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation;* 1 Cor. vi. 2. Now while we are in our state of trial, before the gates of the grave have closed upon us, and before the gates of hell have been opened to receive us.

We are all by nature strangers to God, enemies in our minds by wicked works, and under sentence of condemnation: Remember, O sinners, this is the time to get acquaintance with God, to return to his service, and obtain his special favour. We are defiled and guilty creatures: This is the hour of cleansing, while the fountain of the blood of Christ stands open, to wash us from sin and uncleanness. We are, by nature, utterly unfit for heaven, and all the works and the joys of it, because of the vicious inclinations that govern us. This is the day of repentance as well as pardon: This is the day given us to insure those blessed mansions on high, and to obtain preparing graces. This temporal life is the only season wherein the sentence of our condemnation can be reversed, and wherein we may obtain eternal forgiveness, and a right to life everlasting. The blood and righteousness of the Son of God are not proposed nor offered to guilty creatures in the other world. Now is the time to acquire a meetness for the inheritance in light through the sanctifying influences of the blessed Spirit.

After death there is nothing of this kind to be done: "There is no work, nor device, no knowledge nor wisdom, no faith or repentance to be exercised, no such duty to be performed among the dead, no opportunity to rectify the mistakes of life: There is no grace to be obtained for sinners *in the grave, whither we are all travelling;*" Eccles. ix. 10. What is left undone at that awful moment must be for ever undone. At the voice of the summons we must go, whether pardoned or unpardoned, whether holy or unholy, whether hoping or despairing. And a dreadful spectacle it is, as your eyes ever beheld, to see a sinner expiring in full and raging despair.

But O what infinite advantage has it been to christians, that they have enjoyed this golden hour of grace, and been taught to improve it well! What had become of you, O believers, if ye had been arrested some years ago by the messenger of death, and hurried away into eternity? Where had your portion been, if ye had been sent down to the grave in the midst of your sins, before you were awakened or convinced of your folly and danger, before you had felt inward repentance, or had been acquainted with Jesus that bought and bestows forgiveness; before ye had known the virtue of his reconciling blood, or seen the face of a God reconciled? While your hearts and life were all unclean and unholy, your death must have been dreadful, and your soul for ever unhappy. What infinite honours are due to the patience and long-suffering of your God, and to the mercy and mediation of Jesus your Saviour! Glory be to divine patience and divine grace, for life prolonged, and a sinner saved!

II. Life is yours; it is your opportunity of doing much service for Christ, and manifesting your gratitude for his redeeming love. 2 Cor. v. 15. *They who live, should not henceforth live to themselves, but to him that died for them, and rose again.*

Here on earth you may speak of the wonders of his grace that has saved you, and publish his love that is unspeakable. You may tell sinners of the infinite dimensions of this love, to invite them to partake of the same salvation. Here your lips and your tongues may be delightfully employed, in declaring what you have tasted of the blessings of the gospel, and the grace of Christ; and call others to *taste and see that the Lord is good, and how blessed the man is that trusteth in him!* Psalm xxxiv. 8. Here you may make it known, for the support of poor convinced wretches that are ready to despair, what heights and what lengths, what breadths and what depths there are in the love of Christ; for it reached your soul even at the borders of hell, it spread wide to cover all your great and heinous iniquities; it rises high, for it has lifted your hopes to heaven, and

it stretches its sweet and sovereign influence beyond the length of time, and provides for your life and happiness that shall measure out eternity. Here you may proclaim the praises of your Redeemer to an ignorant world, you may promote his interest a hundred ways on earth, and thus glorify your Saviour which is in heaven.

This is not to be done in the same manner, nor for the same blessed purposes, amongst the saints above. When the body lies senseless and mouldering in the grave, the tongue cannot praise the Lord; *The living, the living, they praise thee as we do this day;* as Hezekiah did when he was recovered from sickness, and had a sense of pardoned sin. Isaiah xxxviii. 17, 18. *In love to my soul, thou hast delivered it from the pit of corruption, for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back. The grave cannot praise thee, the dead cannot celebrate thee; they that go down to the pit cannot hope for thy truth.* This is the proper work of the living saint, to make known to sinners the grace of salvation.

Life is the only time of such work and service. "Opportunity (saith a writer on this subject) is like a golden instrument to dig for heavenly treasure: Do not wear it out as many have done in digging for pebbles, and at your latter end become a fool. Plead not your mean capacity: *Kings of the earth, and all people, old men and children, may praise the Lord;* Psalm cxlviii. 11, 12. Serve your age according to your talent; *Matt.* xxv. 15. He that had but one talent, but a single capacity, was called to account for it, and cast into outer darkness. Think how many opportunities you have outlived, which will never have their resurrection: Redeem lost time, by improving what remains. Project improvements of life, since your light is near extinguished. Make up in affection what may be wanting in action. If you cannot do much, yet love much. If our servants should work no better for us than many have done for God, we should turn them out of doors. Stir up others to work for God, that you may do by their hand what you cannot do by your own." Thus this pious author.

Let us consider what glorious services have been done for God, by the long continuance of saints in this world. Survey the labours and the sufferings, the ministry, the zeal, and the success of the blessed apostles, who planted the first christian churches. What monuments of honour did they raise among Jews and strangers, among Greeks and barbarians, the savage and the polite heathens, to their crucified and exalted Saviour! What multitudes of subjects were brought to bow the knee to Jesus by their preaching! What a large harvest of souls was gathered unto Christ, when the apostle scattered the seed of the gospel all round the countries, from Jerusalem through the provinces of the lesser Asia, and through the southern parts of Europe, as some have supposed, as far as Spain. And the Redeemer was glorified by his labours where the name of the true God the Creator was hardly known before. What an extensive blessing to the world was the life of Paul! It is to this that the following ages of christianity, as well as the primitive saints, owe the unspeakable benefit of his writings; and it is to this that Great Britain owes the blessing of his divine epistles. How honourable was it for St. Paul himself, and how happy for us, that he was made an instrument of such service to Christ, such a glorious service, as spread itself around the nations, and reached to distant ages of mankind. His long life was an illustrious blessing both to himself and to the christian world.

III. Life is yours, O christians, for it allows many a proper season for giving examples of holiness to mankind. And it is a honour to a saint to be made an example

of religion amongst a nation of sinners, or a pattern of holiness among the churches of believers. Herein you become followers and imitators of the blessed Lord your Master: He is the first pattern, he is the most glorious example; for in all things he must have the pre-eminence.

If you become a public and shining example of virtue, and piety, and goodness, you may attain these four very valuable ends at once.

1. By this means you pay great and just honours to the blessed gospel whereby you are saved, and confound and silence the impious accusations and slanders of the wicked: And especially if your station and rank in the world make you the object of more public notice, either in a city, in a village, in a neighbourhood, or in any society of men, then like a candle or a torch set on a hill, you diffuse light and honour far around you, and God and the gospel are glorified on your account. And not only in the higher stations of life, but even servants of the lowest character, if they are but saints, *may adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things;* Titus ii. 10. It is greatly for the credit of our holy religion, when the men of this world, seeing our good works, are forced to confess that there is something divine in christianity, that *God is amongst us of a truth;* and by these means they are constrained to glorify our Father, and our Redeemer, and our holy religion. This is the command of Christ; *Matt.* v. 16.

2. Hereby sinners are not only convinced that there is a power and glory in the doctrine of Christ, but many a soul has been converted to the faith of Jesus, by beholding the pious conversation, the heavenly graces, the holy love, the divine zeal, the constancy, the patience, and the sufferings of christians. The good women in St. Peter's days were exhorted to invite and draw their unbelieving husbands to the faith and love of the gospel, "by beholding their chaste conversation, coupled with religious fear, and the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit:" 1 *Pet.* iii. 1—4. Look forward, O christians, to the last great day, and think with what a pleasing joy you shall hear those who have been converted by your example, and reformed from a licentious course of life, declare this to your public honour before men and angels: Your holy example, though buried long in silence, shall have a glorious resurrection in that day, and the Judge himself shall proclaim it to your praise, that he used your piety here on earth as an instrument of his grace to enlarge his kingdom.

3. Hereby christians of a lower form, and those that are babes in Christ, are awakened to a holy imitation of your superior virtues and graces. It was the continuance of St. Paul in this life, through the various stages of it, that recommended him as a pattern to the believers of his day, in all the various circumstances of their lives; and the longer he lived, the more glorious example he left behind him, for the benefit of the saints, that they might be *followers of him as he was of Christ;* 1 Cor. xi. 1. And I may add in the

Fourth place, Where a christian of shining virtues, and of diffusive goodness, is blessed with a long life, the memory of his example, and the sweet savour of his graces, remain the longer on earth, after his own departure to heaven. It is like a rich perfume that has lain some considerable time among garments; it communicates a pleasant fragrancy to the apparel long after the perfume itself is removed. Thus many a saint, by the sweet odour of his name, has done honour to the gospel in the place where he lived, while his bones are mouldering in the dust: The history of his various virtues has dwelt long on

the lips of the surviving neighbours, and perhaps hath awakened others to an imitation of such a pattern many years after his decease.

Whether example be of any use in heaven, or whether the saints of lower rank there may be excited to holy imitation, by the superior graces or glories of more eminent saints, is not so well known to us; but this we may be well assured of, that the example of christians can have no use in that happy world, to guard the doctrine of Christ from profane reproaches, or to convince or convert sinners and infidels. It is the living, and the living alone, that can do this service for Christ, and glorify his gospel in such instances as these.

But I proceed to another advantage of our continuance in this world.

IV. Life is yours; for it gives opportunity for abounding in good works to the great benefit of mankind. The longer a saint lives, if he maintains his character with honour, he becomes so much a greater blessing to the world. But what a deal of good ceases with the life of a good man!

Christians, ye are required to maintain good works for the honour of your Father, and for the glory of your Saviour, who hath purchased you to be a peculiar people, zealous of good works: But there is another reason for them too, and that is, *these things are good and profitable to men;* Titus ii. 14. compared with the third chapter, *verse* 8. Every day of life opens some new scenes, wherein you may be serviceable to your neighbours, your relatives, your fellow-creatures, and so make the world the better for you.

The days and years of life should be numbered by the multitude of good works, as much as by the revolutions of the sun and moon: For lost and wasted time should not come into the account of life. But if this were our way of counting, what should we say of thousands who have lived to no other purpose but to eat and drink, and to make up the number of mankind? O it is a mean and pitiful thing only to be old in time, and not in duties to God, or benefits to men. And, as an author speaks on this subject, "All the good works of many who are stricken in years will lie in a very little compass: To be an ancient man or woman of two or three years old sounds like a contradiction," and it is, indeed, a matter of great shame, and ought to awaken deep repentance.

How many are there that live to no purpose at all, and the world will not miss them when they are gone! How many that live to wicked purpose, and the world is glad to be rid of them! Some are mere cumberers of the ground, and some are perfect nuisances and public mischiefs. Such should never pretend to the name of christians. Let us remember it was the character of our blessed Lord, that *he went about doing good; and he was willing to work those works while it was his day of life; for the night was coming on him wherein he should have no such sort of work to do;* John ix. 4. O may our Saviour be our pattern, and let us be followers of the holy Jesus! Alas! what a noble pattern! what slow and distant followers!

It was this desire of service to the world, that put the great apostle into a strait betwixt two, as in *Philip.* i. 23. He knew not what to ask for; "Shall I pray for death and glory? my heart hath a wish that way. It is far better for me to depart, and to be with Christ: Or shall I desire to continue in life? This is for the service of your faith, and furtherance of your joy; therefore I am content, saith he, to have my crown and glory deferred, that my longer life may be your advantage." O what an illustrious spirit of zeal and love reigned in the heart of this apostle!

Ye are the light of the world, saith Christ to his disciples; *Matt.* v. 13, 14. What a dark dungeon would this world be, if it had never a saint in it! *Ye are the salt of the earth!* What corruption of manners would overspread the face of the earth! What vile communications and odious practices would defile the world in a few years, if every christian were dead! What shameful and abominable works had overrun the heathen nations before Christ and his gospel appeared, and the idolaters were made christians. A saint in a family, is like *the ark of God in the house* of Obed-edom; 2 Samuel vi. 12. *For the Lord blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that pertained to him, because of the ark of God.* A pious soul is a Joseph in the family of Potiphar. Gen. xxxix. 5. *When the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake, and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house and in the field.*

A number of saints in a city, or a nation, are many times like Noah, Daniel, and Job, in the midst of them. They guard the public by their prayers from mighty ruin and wide desolation. Sodom itself had been saved, if there had been ten righteous souls in it. And I am persuaded Great Britain had been a kingdom of idolaters and slavery, or a heap of confusion and slaughter, and a field of blood long ago, because of the provoking wickedness in the midst of it, had it not been for the few righteous that have always stood in the gap: There have been always some powerful pleaders at the mercy-seat when the wrath of God and the destroying angels have been breaking in like a flood upon us, some Moses and Samuel to withhold the desolation, when popery and tyranny have been just at our gates, and ready to overwhelm us.

O how many unknown blessings do these sinful nations enjoy, because of the lives and the prayers of the saints that are in it! Holy souls, who, though they are divided into different parties, and practise their different forms, yet worship the same God, through the same Mediator, and by the same Spirit, who are ever welcome to the throne of grace, who are all saints in the esteem of God, and in the language of scripture. Strange that the name of a saint should be used as a term of reproach amongst us, and cast upon one party in a way of scorn, when these are the persons of every party who are the most excellent in the earth; these are the guards and walls of defence to the nation, *the chariots of our Israel, and the horsemen thereof;* 2 Kings ii. 12. xiii. 14.

V. Life is yours; for it affords means for brightening your evidence for heaven, and improving your own preparation for glory. Surely you are not willing to depart from this world, till you have good hope of an interest in a better state, and a comfortable expectation that it shall be well with you for ever. Does God prolong your days on earth? See then that the principles of piety and goodness be well rooted in your hearts, and that your graces grow up under the influences of heaven. See that they bud and blossom with fair flowers to the honour of your profession, and to the joy of your own consciences. Let the sacred fruits of your love and zeal break out upon all just occasions: Shine brighter in holiness every day of your mortal life, and bring forth fruits meet for life everlasting, that ye may know and be assured that the seeds of glory are sown within you, such divine seeds as will bear a rich and blessed harvest in the great day.

He that has this hope will purify himself as Christ is pure; 1 John iii. 3. and his increasing purity will confirm his hope. Believe it, christians, as your life and practice grows more divine and undefiled, the image of Christ will appear in you with fairer evidence, and raise your hopes of dwelling with him to the joys of assurance. Many a soul has gone to heaven as in a chariot of triumph, after some years of their practice of

christianity, who, at their first profession of it, were oppressed with many doubts and fears, and were often trembling upon the borders of despair. Life was their blessing indeed, when it taught them to die with faith and honour, and enter into the world of spirits with divine joy.

Let it be said then concerning you, O christians, that you sensibly approach nearer to heaven every month of your continuance upon earth, and that you look more like the inhabitants of that upper world, by how much the longer you continue in this lower state; that when you depart hence, you may be assured of a joyful admission into paradise. May your graces shine bright, and your evidences for heaven appear so glorious and incontested, that there may be no tremblings about your heart in that solemn and important hour; no doubtful flutterings or frights on a death-bed, but that you may find the gates of glory open before you, that you may see your way clear through the dark valley, and have a rich and abundant entrance into the kingdom of your God on high.

VI. Life is yours, that, by a due improvement of it, your crown of glory may be enlarged, and your seat advanced in heaven.

That there are different degrees of honour and joy conferred on the saints above, according to their different characters and capacities, is a doctrine that hath so much countenance and evidence from scripture, that we can no longer justly doubt of it. And I think I have made this appear by incontested proofs in another place.* If you are zealous for the cause of Christ, and active in his service through all the stages of life, and your old age be crowned with abundant fruits of righteousness, your reward in glory shall bear a proportion to these labours, and the length of your time on earth shall give a glorious addition to your recompence in the heavenly world; 1 Cor. xv. 58. *Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.* What a shame and pity is it, that you or I should have a long life on earth, and but a low rank or a little portion of reward in heaven!

But to animate your zeal, I would humbly propose yet a more surprizing advancement in glory, to the diligent improvers of life and grace. What if the services you do for God on earth should still bring forth new fruit among men long after your death? and what if your happiness should be ever increasing in this proportion? When the great Judge comes, he will surely *reward every one according to their works;* But in *Jer.* xvii. 10. it is said, *God will not only give to every man according to his ways, but also according to the fruit of his doings!* What if our labours, our prayers, our pious works and words, or our examples on earth should go on to produce this divine fruit, even the conversion of souls when we are in heaven? And what if the rich and overflowing grace of God should reward us on this account with growing glories? And *those who turn many to righteousness in this manner, should shine as stars with increasing lustre?*

Some divines have supposed, that the mischievous influence of the works and lives of the wicked shall increase their torment: And perhaps, Jeroboam, who set up the calves at Dan and Beth-el, and who made the land of Israel to practise idolatry for some hundreds of years after his own death, might feel yearly more intense agonies of conscience, and his hell grow seven times hotter. This is a dreadful thought, and should terribly awaken and impress those sinners who have diffused their iniquities far and wide, who

*Treatise of death and heaven, discourse II. sect. 2.

have corrupted whole families, and cities, and nations, and spread their poison through succeeding ages. And why may not the joy and crown of St. Paul increase and brighten by the conversion of sinners, through sixteen hundred years, by the influence of his holy writings amongst all the christian nations? And thus not the Thessalonians alone, but the inhabitants of Great-Britain shall be the matter of his glory and his joy? O it is a blessed thing to multiply good instructions, and counsels, and exemplary practices of holiness; and to hear of them after we have gone to heaven, either by ministering angels, or by souls newly arriving there, that they still yield on earth a further crop and harvest of honour to Christ, and profit to men. Such tidings as these cannot but raise and advance our own joys.

As your zeal and labour in active service shall find a retribution every way answerable, so your patience under sufferings shall meet with a proportionable reward. 2 *Cor.* iv. 17. *For our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* Life is the only season, as I shall shew afterwards, for this sort of exercise; and the longer we endure sorrows here honourably, the richer shall our reward be hereafter, though the reward is not of merit but of free grace.

How many saints are there in heaven exalted to eminent stations in that upper world, and some who wear, perhaps, the crown of martyrdom, and enjoy the prizes of victory over a thousand temptations, after they have run a long race in christianity! And yet many of these, it may be, would have possessed but a low station, and a little share of honour and happiness in those heavenly regions, if they had been cut off from the earth in their younger days, and been called away to heaven immediately after their conversion. Surely if you have spent many years in public labour for Christ, and zealous devotion, you have endured cruel mockeries, imprisonments, and sharp sorrows, for the sake of Christ and his gospel, and through the course of a long life, have borne a constant testimony to the faith of Jesus, there are superior glories suited to your character in heaven, which wait your arrival there.

Thus I have made it appear, in various instances, that temporal life itself, and the continuance of it, becomes a real advantage to a true christian, which was the first thing I proposed.

But here is an objection which may be raised against this doctrine, *viz.* "Do not some true christians fall into grievous sins, when their life is prolonged, whereby their conscience is wounded, their garments defiled, their profession blemished, and the holy name of God and Christ blasphemed? Is long life therefore any blessing to christians, since we are so uncertain how we shall behave, and especially if we behave ill?"

Answer 1. The great and natural design, and tendency of our continuance in life, is to do more service for God and men, and obtain more blessings for our own souls; to grow more fit for heaven, and to raise and enlarge our crown. If we abuse the time given us for these blessed purposes, and indulge to sinful lusts or follies, it is highly criminal in us, and we alone must bear the blame.

2. Sometimes those very sins have been so impressed upon the conscience by the convincing Spirit as to become a means to awaken degenerate christians to greater watchfulness, greater tenderness of conscience, and greater degrees of humility, of spirituality, and heavenly-mindedness: Those very falls have been made an occasion of their rise and growth in christianity, by the grace of that God who turns darkness into light, and a curse into a blessing.

But where it is not so, God is not to be charged with injustice, in not raising us to higher degrees after our falls; our negligence and criminal indulgences of temptation, have justly forfeited his peculiar favours: And it must still be confessed, it is our own fault where length of life is not attended with growth in grace, and meetness for superior glory.

I should now proceed to the second general head proposed; but not having room to finish all my design at once, I shall conclude this discourse with these two reflections.

First Reflection.—What a rich advantage is put into the hands of a young convert! When a sinner, in his younger years of life is changed into a saint, what a blessed privilege is granted him by divine grace! And what a glorious opportunity is afforded him, the improvement whereof may reach to everlasting ages!

Happy soul, who art reconciled to God betimes, and a thousand sins in the following course of thy life are hereby prevented! Happy soul, to whom Christ has manifested his love in the beginning of life, and saved thee betimes from eternal death! According to the course of nature, thou hast a prospect of doing long service for thy Lord and thy God. Awaken all thy thoughts; consult, contrive, and seek divine advice what thou shalt do for his honour, who hath given thee so early a salvation. Pray for the direction of the blessed Spirit, to mark out the paths of thy feet, and to employ thy head, thy hands, and thy tongue, in the most honourable manner for thy God, and the most useful for the good of men.

"Remember, every hour of thy time is a part of thy treasure: Let it not be said at last, it was a prize put into the hands of a fool that had no skill nor heart to use it. God, even thy God, expects a daily revenue of glory, as the just improvement of this treasure. Let a holy zeal be kindled within thee, to do glorious services for thy Creator and thy Saviour, and to shew thy large returns of love to him who hath first loved thee. Let a pious ambition set all thy powers at work to do some uncommon good for men, and to be made an extensive blessing to all that are near thee. Arise, and shine long, as a fair example of holiness in a dark and wicked world, and let every year of life brighten thy character on earth, and enlarge thy reward in heaven. Be not content merely to get safe within the walls of paradise; the thief on the cross, who was called at the last hour of life, obtained this privilege; but let thy ambition rise higher, and reach at some of the more exalted stations in that kingdom. Then shall it appear that life is thine in the sweetest sense, when every stage and period of it shall add new honours to the name of thy God, give new blessings to the world, and advance the joys of thy own eternity."

Second Reflection.—If life be such a privilege to a christian, and be a part of his treasure in this sense, then what a dismal account hath an old sinner to give, who hath wasted life and time in folly and guilt, and no part of it hath been improved for his eternal happiness!

O miserable creature! Neither life nor death is thine. Bethink thyself a little, and review the dismal scene: Say to thy soul, "What have I been doing these fifty or sixty years? I came into life guilty and unclean, and am now upon the borders of death unclean and guilty still. I was born a child of wrath, and am a son or daughter of wrath still. I was by nature an enemy to God, and I am an enemy to God still, and have no interest in his love. Life was given me that I might seek reconciliation and grace; but I have neglected and abused offered grace, and am not yet reconciled to my almighty

and offended Maker. The Judge is just at hand, methinks I hear the sound of his chariot-wheels, and a dismal account have I to give of all my wasted life. I have done no real service for God, nor have given an example of holiness to men: but alas! I have been a pattern of iniquity, or at least, I have followed a multitude to do evil: Every year have I heaped up to myself new treasures of wrath in hell, instead of securing a crown in heaven, and advancing my station and my joy there. Is there any hope for me in the poor remains of life that may yet be allotted me? Is the grace of the gospel sufficient to save such a wretch as I am?"

"Yes, O sinner, it is sufficient, for Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the very chief of them. There is grace in the heart of the Father to receive thee; there is sufficient virtue in the blood of Christ to cleanse away all thy guilt; there is influence enough in the blessed Spirit to soften thy heart, and renew thy nature, though thou art an old hardened rebel, and a transgressor from thy very infancy. Lose not a moment more, but set about the work in good earnest; trifle no longer with grace, thou who art on the borders of the grave; fly to the hope that is set before thee; beg salvation of God with daily and nightly tears, and give him no rest till he hath heard thee. Such an importunity is like to be successful; and then, though thy temporal life hath been no benefit to thee hitherto, yet the last moments of it may possibly be accepted, and prevent thy everlasting death; God who is rich in mercy, may bestow on thee some humble place in heaven, but thou canst not expect to shine amongst the brightest saints. Thou mayest be blessed among the dead who die in the Lord, and rest from thy sorrows and thy sins; but thou hast scarce any good works to follow thee. Thy works in all the sprightly years of thy life, have been matter of guilt and shame, and it is infinite mercy, that they shall be remembered no more. But if thy heart be broken for sin, and healed by the blood of Christ, thy humble repentance, and thy holy faith in the few remaining days of old age, and death shall be accepted through the abounding grace of the gospel. The dying thief on the cross forbids thee to despair utterly, though thou hast run a terrible risk, and ventured on the borders of destruction: And if thou art saved at last, it is so as by fire, it is like a brand plucked out of the burning, or as a man escaping naked out of the flames, and passing on the very brink of hell into everlasting life."

The Recollection of the doctrinal part.—"And is life the only space given me to be reconciled to God, and am I still a stranger and an enemy? Have I wasted away so many years of this golden season of hope, this day of mercy, and have I not yet received this mercy, nor laid hold on this hope set before me? Search, examine, enquire, what is thy state, O my soul? And if thou art yet a child of wrath, and unreconciled to God, make haste and fly for refuge to the grace of the gospel. Cry mightily for repentance and forgiveness in the name and blood of Jesus. Let no more days of thy life pass away in such a dangerous and dreadful state, lest life should come to a speedy period, and then thou art banished from grace and hope for ever.

"But if the characters of a sincere penitent, and a holy christian be found with thee; if thou art partaker of the love of God, through the grace of Jesus, then *bless the Lord, O my soul, and let all that is within me praise his holy name*, that he has not cut me off in the days of my enmity to God, unsanctified, and unpardoned; that he has lengthened out my life and the seasons of his mercy, till he has changed my sinful nature, and secured me in the covenant of his grace.

"Is life given me as an opportunity of service to my Lord Jesus? It is he that has re-

deemed me: it is he that has laid out his valuable life for me, what shall I do, O my Saviour, to make some humble returns of acknowledgment and love? O let my useless and unserviceable years be forgiven, and let the remains of life, whether long or short, be all devoted to the interests and honours of my Redeemer. Were it possible for the saints, after they have dwelt sometime in heaven, to come down and dwell on earth again, how would they multiply their labours, and lay out their new life in more activity and service for their God and Saviour! When they have found and tasted what a heaven of happiness succeeds the short labours of life, how would they double all their zeal and diligence, and be grieved they could do no more! When they have seen and conversed with their beloved Lord, and beheld him face to face, with how much warmer love would they engage in his service! Surely they would all cry out, that the longest life on earth is much too short to shew their zeal, affection, and gratitude to so divine and glorious a friend. Think of this, O my soul, and remember, if thou ever arrive safe at heaven, thou wilt wish thou hadst done more for thy beloved Lord here on earth.

" Is this mortal life continued to me that I may spread a savour of piety amongst my fellow-creatures, and set a religious example to men? Lord, suffer me to do nothing that may lead sinners astray from thee. Pardon all the evil examples I have ever given, and let my future conduct shine in holiness, as a pattern to those that are round about me. Methinks, I would convince the world that religion has something excellent and divine in it, and encourage them to the practice of strict godliness.

" Is life prolonged that I may be profitable to mankind, and have I lived thus long already to so little purpose? Though my goodness extends not unto thee, O Lord, yet I entreat that my fellow-creatures may be the better for me while I continue amongst them. O may the God of Abraham bestow on me that rich favour which Abraham received in those divine words of promise, *I will bless thee, and I will make thee a blessing*; Gen. xii. 2. I would fain live useful and beloved, that I may die desired and lamented. What a shameful thing is it when I go out of the world, that my acquaintance should say, " He is gone, but there is no loss of him."

" Have my days been prolonged thus far that my hopes of heaven might be daily increasing, that my evidences of adoption might grow stronger daily, and my soul be more prepared for heaven? Look inward then, O my soul: Hast thou acquired a more divine and heavenly temper than in years past? Art thou wrought up to a greater meetness for the inheritance on high? Are thy desires, thy appetites, and all thy powers more fitted for the business of heaven, and attempered to the blessedness of the upper world? Art thou growing fitter still for the sight of God, for converse with Christ, for the company of saints and holy angels? How are thy days and months, and years run out to waste, if thou art so much nearer death, and yet art not so much riper for heaven!

" And is it possible that a length of life should be so improved, as that my crown of glory, and my portion of happiness may be enlarged hereafter? Let my holy ambition awake at such a hint as this, and let me aspire to a superior rank among the blessed, by employing every part of life to the most noble and excellent purposes for which life is granted. Let me ever abound in the work of the Lord, since I am assured that no part of my labours shall be in vain in the Lord, or want its proper recompence. Though it is the blood of my Redeemer that has purchased all the prizes and crowns in heaven; yet if I am a swift runner in the christian race, and the race itself be long, I am fitted to

receive the fairer prize: And if I am an active and victorious soldier in the army of Christ, and have served faithfully through a tedious war, I may have reason to hope for a brighter crown. We may humbly wait for a reward in proportion to the work, according to the encouragements of the Bible, while we still acknowledge that it is free and sovereign grace both enables us to hold out working, and bestows the rich reward." *Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMON XXXIX.

THE RIGHT IMPROVEMENT OF LIFE.

I.

AND is this life prolong'd to me?
Are days and seasons given?
Shall I not then prepare to be
A fitter heir for heav'n?

II.

I'll never let these moments pass,
These golden hours be gone:
Lord, I accept thy offer'd grace,
I bow before thy throne.

III.

Now cleanse my soul from ev'ry sin
By my Redeemer's blood:
Now let my flesh and heart begin
The honours of my God.

IV.

Let me no more my soul defile
With sin's deceitful toys:
Let cheerful hope encreasing still
Approach to heavenly joys.

V.

My thankful lips shall loud proclaim
The wonders of thy praise,
And spread the savour of thy name,
Where'er I spend my days.

VI.

On earth let my example shine:
And when I leave this state,
May heaven receive this soul of mine
To bliss divinely great.

SERMON XL.

THE PRIVILEGE OF THE LIVING ABOVE THE DEAD.

1 COR. iii. 22.

WHETHER LIFE OR DEATH,——ALL ARE YOURS.

WHEN these words were explained, this doctrine was drawn from the first part of them, *viz.* "When life is given or continued to the saints, it is for their advantage."

The first thing proposed, in our meditations of this truth, was to make it appear by a variety of instances, that life is designed for the benefit of christians. I proceed now to the

Second, *viz.* to amplify and confirm this doctrine yet further, by representing what various graces may be exercised on earth, which can have no place in heaven; and to discover in what respects, a living christian may be said to have some advantage over the saints that are dead.

I. The first grace I shall mention, which belongs only to this life, is, faith of things unseen, whether present or future: for in heaven this sort of faith is ended and lost; it vanishes into sight. 1 *Cor.* v. 7. Here in this world we walk by faith, and not by sight; but in the world above, we shall live by sight, and not by faith. *Blessed are those souls* on earth *who have not seen, and yet have believed;* John xx. 29.

Hereby the living christian doth much honour to God, and offers him a revenue of such glory, as can never be offered to him among all the saints and angels on high. To believe that there is a God who made all things, among a world of atheists, that deny him that made them; to carry it toward an unseen God with a solemn awe of his majesty, and deep reverence and submission to his will, in the midst of thoughtless sinners who deride religion, and live without God in the world; to believe that the Bible is the word of God, notwithstanding all the difficulties contained in it, and all the bold and subtle cavils that infidels have raised against it; to make this word the ground of our religion, the rule of our practice, and the foundation of our hopes, in the midst of an age of deists and heathens, that laugh at our Bible and our belief together: These are noble instances of a militant faith in a world of infidelity. To believe that Jesus of Nazareth, who was hanged upon a tree without Jerusalem, and died there, is the only begotten Son of God, the Maker and the Saviour of the world, to believe that he now lives and governs all things at the right-hand of his Father, and to trust in him who died upon the cross to give us a crown of eternal life; these are such exercises of the grace of faith, as have no place in the world of sight, where every saint beholds him face to face: Such acts as these, are only suited to our present state of absence from the Lord, and yet they are highly honourable to God and our Redeemer, *whom having not seen we love, and in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable;* 2 Peter i. 8.

To believe that there is a heaven of glory far above the clouds, where our Lord Jesus

Christ has dwelt in his human nature almost two thousand years, and where ten thousands of his blessed saints and angels are for ever enjoying divine consolations; to maintain a firm belief that there is a reward for the righteous laid up on high, while they are here trodden to the dust; to believe there is a hell, an unseen world of misery and torture, where damned spirits are punished for their rebellion against the great God, and shall for ever suffer the weight of his indignation; and to walk through this world with a holy negligence and contempt of it under the influence of these future invisibles, these eternal joys and eternal sorrows: This is a faith that gives much glory to God, while we live, and speak, and act, while we suffer and endure, as seeing him who is invisible, and firmly believing all the joys and terrors of another world, which are hidden from us by the veil of flesh and blood.

This was the faith of the ancient patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; this was the faith of Noah and Moses, and many other heroes, whose names shine with honour in St. Paul's epistle to the Hebrews; and the great and blessed God received daily honours from this their faith.

In heaven all these invisibles are seen, all these futurities become present, and they are no longer matters of faith. O that this faith might overspread the earth, as sight is found all over heaven!

II. Hope and expectation of future blessings, either here or hereafter, under all present darknesses and discouragements, is another grace which may be exercised by the living saints; but among the saints that are dead there is no room nor place for it; for in heaven our hope is turned into enjoyment; *hope that is seen or enjoyed, is not hope, what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it;* Rom. viii. 24. And this patient and cheerful expectation under discouraging difficulties, is a glorious homage paid to God, such as the saints in heaven cannot pay him.

The living christian knows not what honour he brings to his God, when his hope for promised mercies bears itself up, while there are no appearing prospects to the eye of sense, and in opposition to a thousand rising dangers; when he can live upon the naked promise, and be assured of the full performance, merely because his God hath spoken it. Then we give honour to God, such as the souls in heaven cannot give him, when under the renewed exercise of faith and repentance we maintain a humble hope of the pardon of sin through the promises of his gospel, even though our iniquities have been exceeding great, and though sin is every day working and striving against our best purposes, and too often bringing us under fresh guilt.

Then we glorify our blessed Redeemer so as the saints in heaven cannot glorify him, when we feel our consciences burdened with sin, and yet maintain faith and hope of acceptance with a great and holy God, through the death, righteousness, and intercession of a person whom we never saw. This is an illustrious honour done to the name, and sacrifice, and mediation of the Son of God.

Then we give glory to the blessed Spirit our enlightener, and our sanctifier, when in the midst of our own errors and darknesses, and in the midst of difficulties and cavils raised by men, we trust in his promised guidance into all necessary truth; when we walk on in the midst of temptations, waiting and hoping for fresh sanctifying influences, while we feel and groan over the deceitfulness and the weakness of our own hearts, that are too ready to start aside from God like a broken bow.

Then we honour God and his gospel indeed, when we hope for our own final salvation through the blood of the everlasting covenant, having fled for refuge to the hope that is set before us, though by the wiles of the devil, we have been under strong temptations to despair, and sometimes have seemed to be forsaken of God, as Christ Jesus was when hanging on the cross: It was then that he glorified his Father and his God, by the constancy and courage of his hope, in such a manner as he was never capable of doing after that great and dreadful day; and herein his poor tempted followers have been noble imitators of their Saviour and their Lord, and have held fast their confidence in divine mercy in the midst of sore temptations, and given great glory to their God and Father.

Nor is this hope a vain presuming confidence, or a bold fit of enthusiasm, for it evidences its own heavenly and divine original, by keeping the soul pure, and holy, and humble, in the midst of all this darkness, and this disconsolate state; *He that hath this hope will purify himself, even as Christ is pure;* 1 John iii. 3. A presuming hope that carries no spring of holiness in it, can neither honour God nor profit men.

But there are other occasions also in this life, for the exercise of the grace of hope, *viz.* amidst huge and threatening difficulties, that relate to the public interests of religion. When the feeble and doubting christian sees the affairs of the church of Christ sinking daily, he is almost ready to sink and die too, and to despair for Zion; and it is the language of his unbelief, *by whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small?* But the stronger christian, who knows how to live upon a promise, can reply, that the God of Jacob is almighty, the king of Israel is the true God and everlasting king, and the interest of the church shall rise again, even though it were drowning; for not all the floods on earth, nor even the gates of hell shall prevail against the church that is built upon Jesus the rock of ages: And Jesus himself receives his special tribute of glory from his saints on earth, while they triumph in this hope.

There are also some seasons wherein a living saint honours God in this world, by maintaining his hope in the midst of various trials that attend him in his private affairs, and especially when poverty and distress overtake him like an armed man, and he hath no other help nor hope left, but in some gracious words of promise, and some unknown appearances of providences in his behalf. Blessed are the poor who can live by faith!

A christian honours God also greatly in the days of sickness, and the hour of death, when he feels nature sinking, and flesh dissolving; yet he can look upon his withering limbs without dismay, in the hope of the resurrection, and speak in the language of holy Job, *Though after my skin worms devour this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:* Job xix. 26.

I grant that the saints who are in heaven, the spirits of the just made perfect, wait also, and hope for the resurrection of the body, and all the promised blessings of that day: but they have a bright and sure prospect of it by the light of glory, in which they read all the promises; and they have a pledge and pattern of it in the body of Jesus Christ raised from the dead, and glorified in the midst of them. Their hope lies under no darkness, no discouragement. The saints on earth therefore, in the exercise of this their hope, give a greater glory to God than those in heaven; for it struggles with mighty difficulties, and overcomes them all. It is such a hope as Abraham built on the mere promise of God, that he should have a son when he was a hundred years old, and his wife Sarah was ninety. *He hoped in God who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were; who against hope believed in hope, that he*

might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken; So shall thy seed be. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; Rom. iv. 17, 18, 20.

III. Liberality and compassion to the poor is another exercise of grace, for which this life only gives opportunity. The objects of our bounty on earth are both saints and sinners; for we are charged to imitate our heavenly Father, *who commands his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and his rain to fall and refresh the just and the unjust;* Matt. v. 45. But in the world to come, the saints are raised far above the want of our compassion, and condemned sinners in their long everlasting misery are forbid all refreshment.

It is in this life only, that we can shew our love to Christ himself, by refreshing the bowels of his saints. It is here that we may treasure up matter for divine approbation and solemn applause, in the great judgment-day, when the alms that have been given in a private corner, where *the left-hand has not known what the right-hand did,* shall be published with honour before that innumerable assembly. "I remember," says our blessed Lord, "I well remember, when in yonder world ye fed my hungry saints, then ye fed and nourished me; when ye gave drink to them, ye gave drink to me, and relieved my thirst; when ye bestowed garments on them, it was I that was naked, and ye clothed and covered me; and when ye visited them in sickness or in prison, I was the prisoner, I was sick, and I take it as kindly as though ye had visited and comforted me." Astonishing condescension of the Son of God! Surprizing honour put on the liberal christian! But here is the only place for acquiring these honours, though they are published hereafter.

There is no poor christian to be supplied in heaven out of the stores of your bounty, no naked saints to be clothed there. All the regions of heaven cannot afford any such object of your compassion and love. Many a saint on earth is hungry, and thirsty, and naked, and exposed to sore hardships and necessities, but necessities and hardships are unknown in heaven. Many a widow, and orphan, and poor destitute christian, lies sick and groaning as it were at the gates of glory: Let us seize the opportunity to feed, to support, and to comfort them; for there is no destitute creature, no sick or poor, no needy widow or orphan, within the gates.

Life is given to some persons for this very end! Good Dorcas was even raised from the dead, and had her life lengthened out to make more coats and garments for the poor. Ministering to the saints is a delightful labour, and a business worth living for. In this world the rich christian has the honour of being a steward for God to feed his children; but in the world above, there are no earthly treasures to receive such a sort of consecration as this is, no alms to be offered up as an acceptable sacrifice to God the Father, or to his Son Jesus. See then that ye practise this virtue as often as providence gives a proper occasion, and thus consecrate your substance to the Lord of the whole earth. Lend a little to the Lord in this manner, and it shall be paid with large interest: *He that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord, and he will repay him;* Prov. xix. 17.

Perhaps another week, or another day shall divide you from all your earthly riches; no more of them can be laid out for God: Perhaps death may send you into the invisible world, and ye shall have no more objects of your pity for ever; *whatsoever thy hand then finds to do, do it with all thy might;* Eccles. ix. 10. *You that are rich in this world, be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store a good foundation against the time to come, that ye may lay hold on eternal life;* 1 Tim. vi.

18, 19. And remember that *he that sows sparingly, shall reap sparingly; but he that soweth bountifully in his distributions to the poor, for the sake of Christ, shall also reap bountifully of the riches of glory, in the great day of reward;* 2 Cor. ix. 6.

IV. Another grace which only the living can exercise, is, charity to our fellow-creatures under their mistakes, or infirmities, and a charitable and loving frame of spirit to our fellow-christians who differ from us either in principle or practice.

Infirmities and mistakes belong only to the present state: This life is the only time when a fellow-saint can be overtaken in a fault, and when we are capable of restoring such a one in the spirit of meekness. It is here only that the proposed motive has any room or place; *consider thyself lest thou also be tempted;* Gal. vi. 1. And though we are bound to maintain an everlasting aversion to every sin, yet we should imitate and honour the forgiving mercy of our God, by speaking peace and consolation to a returning sinner.

Be not too severe in your censures, you who have been kept from temptation, but pity others who are fallen, and mourn over their fall. Do not think or say the worst things you can of those who have been taken in the snare of Satan, and been betrayed into some grosser iniquities. When you see them grieved and ashamed of their own follies, and bowed down under much heaviness, take occasion then to speak a softening and a healing word. Speak for them kindly, and speak to them tenderly. *Have compassion of them, lest they be swallowed up of over much sorrow;* 2 Cor. ii. 7. And remember too, O censorious christian, that thou art also in the body, it is rich grace that has kept thee hitherto, and the same God, who for wise ends has suffered thy brother to fall, may punish thy severity and reproachful language, by withholding his grace from thee in the next hour of temptation; and then thy own fall and guilt shall upbraid thee with inward and bitter reflections, for thy sharp censures of thy weak and tempted brother. This life is the only time wherein we can pity the infirmities of our brethren, and bear their burdens. This law of Christ must be fulfilled in this world, for there is no room for it in the next; *wherefore bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil ye the law of Christ;* Gal. vi. 2.

This world is the only place where different opinions and doctrines are found amongst the saints: Disagreeing forms of devotion, and sects, and parties, have no place on high: None of these things can interrupt the worship or the peace of heaven. See to it then, that you practise this grace of charity here, and love thy brother, and receive him into thy heart in holy fellowship, though he may be weak in the faith, though he may observe days and times, and may feed upon herbs, and indulge some superstitious follies while thou art strong in faith, and well acquainted with the liberty of the gospel. Let not little things provoke you to divide communions on earth; but by this sort of charity, and a catholic spirit, honour the Saviour and his church here in this world; for since there are no parties, nor sects, nor contrary sentiments among the church in heaven, this christian virtue can never find any room for exercise there. This kind of charity ends at death.

V. Sympathy with mourners, and pity and relief to those that are oppressed with many sorrows, is a virtue that belongs only to the saints on earth. There are no sorrowful christians in heaven, and the various methods of comfort, which we practise toward our suffering brethren here below, are therefore impracticable in the upper world. *The God of all comfort is he who comforteth us in our tribulations, for this reason, that we*

may be able to comfort those that are oppressed with their heavy afflictions; 2 Cor. i. 4. *This is pure religion and undefiled, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their afflictions, as well as to keep yourselves unspotted from the world;* James i. 27. But it is the religion of the church on earth, not the religion of heaven.

Go then, and visit thy brother in distress, visit poor afflicted and suffering christians: Go mention the promises of divine grace that belong to them in a suffering state, and lead them to rest upon some happy promise: Go teach them the benefit of afflictive circumstances: Let the twelfth chapter to the Hebrews be your text, and raise many a sweet inference for the support of sufferers. Tell them of the fruits of holiness that grow upon the bitter tree of earthly sorrows; and that the wood of the cross blossoms with grace and glory. Put them in mind of the examples of divine deliverance, when there has been no outward prospect of help and hope. Lead them to a meditation of the heavenly state: Point their thoughts upward: Direct their faith and their hope thither: Teach them to look at the things that are unseen and eternal, that they may be able in the language of faith to say, *These light afflictions which are but for a moment, are working for us an eternal weight of glory;* 2 Cor. iv. 17.

There are no sorrows among the inhabitants of heaven, no sufferings there, no pain, no complaint; nor is there any need of your consolations: This is a work you cannot do in paradise, but God delights to see his children here comfort one another in their travels through this valley of tears, this tiresome wilderness; 1 *Thess.* iv. 18. Then let us give our fellow-christians their due of consolation, and offer to our God the sacrifice of his delight.

VI. Forbearance and forgiveness of real or supposed injuries, is a grace to be practised only by the living christian. Christ Jesus our Lord demands it, and lays a bar upon your hopes of the forgiveness of God, if ye refuse it to your fellow-creatures; *Matt.* vi. 14, 15. And the great apostle entreats you to practise it. *Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man hath a quarrel against any: Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye;* Col. iii. 12, 13. Charity, or love, as it should be translated, suffers long, beareth all things, and hopeth all things; and though considered in the general notion of love to the saints, it lives for ever in heaven; yet these special exercises of it belongs to this world. Charity or love is not easily provoked, it thinketh no evil, gives every thing the best turn that it will bear, and puts the best sense upon all things that are spoken. O that every living christian might adorn his profession with the exercise of this virtue! 1 *Cor.* xiii. 4—8.

Meekness is a grace which has no place in the upper world, in this respect, that it has no trials there. Glorify God your Saviour therefore in the days of your trial here below, and be ye meek and lowly as he was; be ye slow to anger, and swift to forgive, as God your Father is. When you hear a word of offence or reproach spoken, and feel the rising ferment of the blood, watch against it, subdue it: This is the hour of battle, see that ye come off conquerors. When there is a word of bitterness upon your tongue, stifle it, and keep silence, subdue the temptation, and prevent that sin; give glory to God in this manner, which the saints in heaven cannot do. *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: Be not overcome with evil; but overcome evil with good;* Rom. xii. 19, 21.

Love is a virtue that flourishes in heaven, it grows high, it spreads wide, and it shines

bright in the upper world. Love is a grace that out-lives faith and hope, and endures for ever. There is no such union of hearts, no such sacred bonds of affection, as are found among the saints on high. Heaven is the very element and region of love; but it is all love to God, love to Christ, and to our fellow-saints: For love to enemies is not known in that country, because there is no enemy there. To love them that hate us, to bless them that curse us; to pity, and forgive, and pray for those that injure us; these are not only noble singularities of the christian religion, which are not known amongst all the catalogues of heathen virtues, but neither are they practised in the heavenly world. As glorious and sublime as they are, yet they are never found among *the spirits of the just made perfect:* Those holy souls are all far above the reach of malice, hatred, and enmity; there are no objects there for them to exercise these divine virtues upon. Love to enemies therefore dwells only amongst the living saints: To forgive injuries, is the glory that is peculiar to christians in this mortal state, and our blessed Saviour has a most peculiar revenue of honour from it.

But besides the honour that Christ and his gospel receive from such a kind and charitable conduct, there is a pleasure in this victory over resentment, that far exceeds the pleasure of revenge, which is the delight of the wicked: And it is a pleasure also, which the saints above cannot partake of; for there are no offences, no injuries, no provocations there: This life alone is the time to forgive, and to be forgiven. Now who is there among us, that would not seize the opportunity of every injury and offence, to practise a glorious duty, and enjoy a pleasure which the blessed in heaven cannot taste?

VII. Self-denial and mortification of sin, belongs also to this life alone. It is the first lesson in the school of Christ, to *deny ourselves daily, if we will be his disciples;* Luke ix. 23. but it is the lesson of the school, and not of the palace; a lesson for earth, and not for heaven; for in the world above, our duty is all delight, and there is no need of contradicting our own pleasure, or our interest, in order to please or serve our God, or our brother. In those holy regions, every part of our work is congenial to our sanctified natures, and with resistless appetite and inclination we shall pursue all the duties that belong to that happy state.

Nor are there any sins to be mortified there: The body of death is buried with the body of flesh in the grave, and earth is the place where the members of it must be put to death. *Mortify your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry;* Col. iii. 5. Let us be daily engaged in the zealous practice of this duty, and subdue all the unruly appetites that make an assault upon our virtue, that defile our consciences, and subdue our peace. Now, now is the time to set ourselves at work to fight against our vicious inclinations, and our irregular desires: Now let us multiply our victories over sin and self. Earth is the field of battle with sin: In heaven our desires shall all be pure and holy, there is no sinful wandering appetite, no perverse affection; no irregular thought or wish amongst all the saints above: There is no contest with indwelling corruptions, no such conquests are to be gained in all that holy and happy world. There are no new honours of this kind to be given to Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, nor any new triumphs to be obtained over sin, to the glory of divine grace. Come then, let us bestir ourselves, and awake to the battle; let us bravely resist the workings of flesh and blood, by the aids of the blessed Spirit; let us *be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus,*

and maintain the glorious warfare, like soldiers who fight for the honour of their general, and who hope for a crown of immortality.

If this Sermon be too long, it may be divided here.

VIII. Repentance and godly sorrow for our past offences, belong only to this life. Converting grace works only on earth; we are called to repent, in order to be forgiven: *Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out;* Acts iii. 19. And the exercise of this grace is not only necessary at first conversion (though it most eminently appears at that season), but it must run like a thread through the whole course of this mortal life, till death shall put an utter end to sin. Let every known sin therefore which we are guilty of, be attended with some new and sensible exercise of shame, and sorrow, and holy indignation against ourselves. Let us live in a daily, constant, penitent frame, for we are daily sinners. This painful sense of sin, this holy mourning, is an honour done to the law of our God. It is the living, the living who are called to this work; for *there is no repentance in the grave:* Shew your hatred of sin therefore continually, and your sincere love to the law of holiness by such an humiliation as becomes an imperfect saint.

You will ask me, "Do not saints in heaven repent that they have ever sinned here on earth?"

I answer, that whatsoever regret they feel in the memory of their past transgressions, it is not attended with such sensible shame and inward pain at the heart, as are necessary to that duty of repentance that is required here on earth; for there is nothing must break in upon their perfect peace or joy in heaven. As God is said not to remember their iniquities, because he does not remember them in order to punish, so the saints above are not said to repent of sin, because they have no such shame and grief accompanying it as whilst they dwelt upon earth, and which are some of the most remarkable ingredients in our repentance.

But we may suppose there is among them some sort of holy self-displicency, and something of a sacred regret, that ever they offended such a God, and such a Saviour. There will be surely an inward and hearty disapprobation of their former sinful ways, whenever they think upon them: And, indeed, without some reflection on their former guilt and misery, they can never give due glory to Christ their Redeemer, who rescued them from their sorrows and their sins. But all the painful and shameful attendants of this grace of repentance must be banished from heaven, because it is a state of perfect joy and peace.

IX. Patience and submission to the will of God under all manner of painful providences, gives glory to God here on earth, such as the saints in heaven cannot give him. We are taught indeed to say, *Lord, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven:* But it is the preceptive will of God, or the will of his commands, which is here signified, not his providential will, whereby he punishes; for there is no affliction in heaven, and therefore there is no such sort of submission, no exercise of patience there: They obey the will of his commands in perfection there, and God himself has no will that they should suffer, or endure sorrow.

Shew then, O believers, your submission to the will of God here, as dear and obedient children, when your heavenly Father sees it needful to chasten you; Heb. xii. 6—11. *If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he*

whom the Father chasteneth not? Give him reverence therefore when he corrects you, and be ye in subjection to the Father of spirits and live. It is only children under age that their earthly fathers scourge and chastise; such are christians in this world, the sons of God in their infant state; but when the children are grown up to manly age, they have no more chastisement; such are the saints in heaven, who are *grown to the fulness of the measure of that stature* which God designs for them in Christ. This life therefore is the only time when you can honour the sovereignty and the wisdom of God your Father, when he sees fit to take his rod in hand, and to instruct you in righteousness.

X. A sacred compassion for perishing sinners, and longing desire and labour for the conversion of souls, is a business that belongs to this life only. When we are past the line of time, and entered into eternity, we can add no new subjects to the kingdom of our Lord: This is a service that can be performed no where but in the present state: It is the living, and they alone that have this work intrusted with them. When the lips are closed in the grave, they cannot speak for God, nor exhort sinners to be saved.

Let ministers call up all their powers then to the blessed work of the gospel. Let them stir up all their gifts, and employ them all for the welfare of immortal souls. What is their furniture of human learning? What are their talents of oratory, their flowing language, and their art of persuasion? What is their vivacity of spirit, their sweetness of voice, their penetrating force of elocution? What are all these but weapons of warfare to fight against the kingdom of Satan among men, and instruments to build up the church of God on earth? What are they all but consecrated gifts to win souls to Christ out of the kingdom of this world? They are given only for service in the present life. Let us use them then with our utmost skill for these holy purposes: For, *whether there be tongues, they shall cease: Whether there be knowledge* and human learning, *that shall vanish away;* 1 Cor. xiii. 8, 9. These poor imperfect talents are not made for heaven. Let our zeal therefore employ them to the utmost on earth.

O let us be *instant in season and out of season,* and proclaim the terrors of the law to awaken the stupid and impenitent, to make them fly from the wrath to come. Let us publish the glad tidings of the gospel, and by all the methods of compassion and tenderness, let us beseech and intreat sinners to be reconciled to God. Let us set the unsearchable riches of Christ before them, the all-sufficiency of his righteousness, and the power of his grace; and study and contrive how we may address their consciences in the most successful manner, till we have won their hearts over to Christ and salvation.

And let this not only be the labour of the sanctuary, and the work of our public offices in the church, but let the houses where we dwell, and the families where we visit, be witnesses for us in the great day, that we have instructed and warned the souls of men, that we have carried on the business of the pulpit in the parlour, and have spread the savour of the knowledge of Christ through all our conversation.

Let parents that are solicitous for the eternal welfare of their offspring, and love their sons and daughters as their own souls, let them seize the present opportunity for this sort of work. Let them make use of all the language of gentle authority, and of constraining love, to win the hearts of their children to God, to persuade them to accept of the grace of Christ, and snatch them as brands out of the burning. Let friends and dearest relatives, let masters and rulers of families, lay hold on every just occasion to speak of the things of God to those that are near them. Life is the only time to express our zeal for God, and love to souls, in such a manner as this. When we

pray, *Thy kingdom come*, we should awaken our endeavours to gain some new subjects to Christ.

Come, let us all engage our own consciences in this sacred and compassionate work, while we consider, that *to-day is the accepted time, now is the hour of salvation.* God may put an end to our own lives, or the lives of our friends to-morrow; and either their death or ours will prevent this sort of work for ever. Then we can speak no more, or they can hear us no more: They will be for ever out of the reach of our compassionate desires to save them. We may send our bitter sighs, and our fruitless groans, after them, when they are gone down to darkness without hope; and we may feel the inward anguish of a sharp and painful repentance, while, through our neglect, and their own folly and wickedness, they are cursing the day of their birth, and crying out, in full despair, under the torture of divine vengeance.

XI. Another grace, which can be exercised only in this life, is, holy zeal, and boldness in the profession of christianity, with courage in suffering for Christ. These are virtues that belong only to our mortal state; these are made necessary to the saints, by the opposition that is raised against true religion by the men of this world. Here in this world, *they that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution;* 2 Tim. iii. 12. Our Saviour himself, in the first publication of his own gospel, *endured the contradiction of sinners against himself;* he sealed his doctrine with his own blood, and has given his followers a glorious example of a suffering zeal and holy fortitude. Imitate him who *endured the cross, and despised the shame;* Heb. xii. 2, 3.

This sort of virtues doth not belong to the heavenly state; for there is no opposition made to truth and holiness: There are no such trials of our zeal and courage in heaven; courage to speak boldly for Christ, and zeal to give him public glory, by maintaining his gospel in the face of terror and death; for there are no infidels, no sinners, no enemies in all the heavenly regions. There are no threatening tyrants, no persecuting powers, no penal laws in the upper world: No prisons, no fires, no gibbets nor axes there for the followers of the Lamb; no cruel mockings, nor so much as a reproachful word: But the greater our zeal is for the service of God and our Saviour in the heavenly state, the greater shall be our honour and applause among the inhabitants of that country.

Endure then for a season, ye disciples of Christ, grow bold in the profession of his name, and exult with holy *joy, that you are counted worthy to suffer shame for his sake;* Acts v. 41. It is here on earth only, that it is in your power to shew, how much you love your Saviour more than your life, and that your love to your Lord is stronger than death with all its terrors. Upon this account shall I exhort you to practise what the apostle James expresses; James i. 2. *Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into divers temptations; for the proof or trial of your faith shall appear honourable and glorious when Christ comes;* 1 Pet. i. 7. It was a frequent and sacred ambition among the primitive christians, to contend for the crown of martyrdom. This world is the only stage for such bloody conflicts, and this life is the only season wherein we can obtain the addition of this ornament to our crown of glory.

XII. May I add in the last place, that a calm and cheerful readiness for a removal out of this world, is an honour done to Christ and his gospel here on earth, which belongs not to the heavenly state. Death, in the course of nature, as well as by the hands of violence, hath always something awful and formidable in it. Flesh and blood

shrinks and trembles at the appearance of a dissolution, and Christ delights to see the grace that he has wrought in his saints, gain the ascendancy over flesh and blood, and conquer the terrors of death and the grave. He loves to see his followers maintain a serene soul, and venture into the invisible world upon the merit of his blood, with holy fortitude and a cheerful faith. It is only the living christian that can die, and glorify God his Saviour in that great and important hour. The saints, who are arrived at heaven, *dwell in the temple of God, and shall go no more out;* Rev. iii. 12. They are for ever possessed of life and immortality. There are no more deaths or dangers for them to encounter, no more terrors to engage their conflict. Death is the last enemy of the saints; and when the christian meets it with sacred courage, he gives that honour to the Captain of his salvation, which the saints in glory can never give, and which he himself can never repeat. Dying with faith and fortitude, is a noble conclusion of a life of zeal and service. It is the very last duty on earth; when that is done, then heaven begins.

Thus I have made it evident, in many instances, that there is a rich variety of virtues and graces to be exercised in this life, which have no place after death; and upon this account the living christian may be said to have some advantage beyond the dead.

Here an objection or two will arise that may require an answer.

Objection I. But is not heaven always represented as a state of perfection? Is not grace and holiness more complete there than ever they have been, or can be in the time of our mortal life? And yet, how can it be a state of greater perfection, if so many graces are wanting there?

Answer.—These graces which belong to the living saint, and have no place among the happy dead, are but the various exercises of a sanctified mind, arising from some imperfections in our present state. Faith is owing to our want of sight; Hope is owing to our want of enjoyment: Patience, courage, compassion, forbearance, forgiveness, repentance, and such-like graces, are owing to the sins, the sorrows, or the temptations that are found in this world only. The follies, the mistakes, the infirmities of ourselves, or our fellow-christians, or the wickedness of the world wherein we live, are the only things that give occasion for the exercise of such graces as I have now mentioned, therefore in a perfect state there is no room for them.

Yet every saint in heaven has a sanctified nature, which is the root and spring of all these graces, and they would appear in glorious exercise again, if there were any objects, or occasions, or seasons proper to excite them. Therefore the saints above are not defective in any virtue or grace, though they have no actual exercise of several of them in heaven. So God himself would not be in himself less merciful, if he appeared in any province of his dominion where there was no creature in misery, and consequently no proper object for mercy. He is a God of infinite compassion and forgiveness still, though he has no immediate new exercises of them in heaven, in a world where no sinners are; for sin and misery are the only proper occasions of forgiveness and mercy. Thus the saints in heaven are perfect in grace and holiness, even though there are no proper objects or occasions for this holiness or this grace to manifest itself in such peculiar instances as I have been describing in this discourse.

II. How can it be said, that a living christian has any advantage above the dead? Is not heaven better than earth? And upon that account, is not death often represented to us under most pleasing colours in the gospel, as it is an escape from the sins and sor-

rows of this present state, and as it conveys us into the world of blessed spirits, where there are infinite advantages above any thing to be enjoyed in this life?

Answer.—Though the living saint has some advantages which the dead cannot partake of, yet it is very true, that the honours, the pleasures, the joys, the perfections, and the advantages of heaven, when summed up together, are far more and greater, and are infinitely preferable to those on earth; but they are not all of the same kind. When we compare the state of grace and the state of glory together, we may boldly say, the state of glory has vastly the preference; and St. Paul himself thought so, Phil. i. 21, 23. *To be dissolved, and to be with Christ, is far better* than to dwell in this sinful world. He asserts it, that death would be his own gain; yet still he allows there are some advantages of this life, which death would deprive him of; for, says he, *for me to live* in the flesh, will be for the honour of Christ in his churches; and I shall have this fruit of my life, even the *furtherance of your faith and joy;* verses 22, 25.

When we are encouraging christians to live above the fear of death, we represent to them all the glories and felicities of the future world, which are infinitely superior to all things we can enjoy in this life. But while we continue here on earth, under the difficulties and hardships of the present state, *we have need of patience, that when we have done the will of God, we may receive the promises;* Heb. x. 36. And we have need of all those peculiar advantages to be set before us, which can belong to our stations here on earth, on purpose to support our patience, to bear us up under present burdens, and make us active in present duties: Although it must be still confessed, that all those advantages of this life, joined with our present sins and sorrows, are much inferior to the actual taste and fruition of the joys of heaven, where sin and sorrow are known no more.

This thought very naturally leads me to the improvement and conclusion of my discourse, which I shall wind up briefly in these four practical inferences:

Inference I. Since there are many virtues and duties which belong only to this present life, "let us lose no opportunity for the practice of them; for the next day, or the next hour, may put it for ever out of our power to practise them." Eternity is a long duration indeed, but it will never afford us one season for visiting the sick, for feeding the hungry, or for charity and meekness towards those who injure us: Eternity itself will never give us one opportunity for the pious labours of love toward the conversion of sinful acquaintance and relatives. O let us not suffer this precious lamp of life to burn in vain, or weeks, and days, and hours, to slide away unemployed and useless. Let us remember, that while we are here, we work for a long hereafter; that we think, and speak, and act with regard to an eternal state, and that in time we live for eternity. Let us call up all our powers to action and diligence, that not a day of our short lives may pass away, but what may turn to our account in the years of eternity. While God is pleased to delay our heaven, let our continuance on earth be filled up with the various exercises of such graces as are suited to our present stations. Let this be a new spring and motive to our zeal, that we are doing such honours to God and our Saviour here on earth, of which none of the saints above are capable, and for which this life is the only season: And let it appear in the day of retribution, that the length of our life here on earth, has been a great, and real, and everlasting advantage to us, by preparing us for a higher station after death, and a fairer inheritance in that world which is everlasting.

II. "Though your hopes of heaven be never so well grounded, yet be not too impatient of dwelling longer on the earth: And though your burdens and sorrows may be very great in life, yet be not too hasty and importunate in your desires of death." Support yourself under all the fatigues, trials, and difficulties of the present state, with this consideration, that you are now employed in such service for God, and paying such a tribute of honour to him in your suffering circumstances, as all the saints in heaven cannot do. Some of the children of God in this world have been too impatient of life, and too eager in their importunities for death and the grave. Job and Elijah were great favourites of heaven, but they failed a little in this point: And God, in the course of his providence, afterward made it appear what eminent service he had for them both to do before they left this world. Elijah was designed to reform the whole nation of Israel from idolatry, and Job to be the parent of a new large family, and give the world an example of God's rewarding providence. *If life be yours*, O christian, and be numbered among your possessions, be not too hasty to part with it, nor to throw away that talent which may yet, in days to come, be employed to the signal honour of thy God and Saviour.

III. "If life be almost spent, and you have done little for God, see that in your last, your dying hours, if possible, you speak and act for his glory. Let not the whole season of life quite pass away, and be turned over like a blank leaf which has none of the praises of God written upon it.* A word of warning from a death-bed may make a deep and happy impression on those that hear it, and through divine grace may save a soul; and if so, thou shalt hear of it again with honour and applause in the great day. The thief that was converted upon the cross, spoke a word for Christ in his last moments, and it has been blessed to rescue many from the jaws of despair: That dying creature had done nothing for God in his life; a vicious life, and a wicked creature! But the profession of sincere faith and repentance which he made at his death, hath been richly honoured in the kingdom of grace; and I am persuaded it has helped many a fearful christian on toward the kingdom of glory.

IV. "If so many valuable works are done, and so many graces are exercised on earth, which have no place in heaven, then the lives of the saints are worth praying for. Precious in the eye of God is the life of his saints, and they should be precious in the eye of man too. When an active, useful christian, when a pious magistrate, when a zealous and faithful minister goes down to the dust, alas! how much good ceases from the earth for ever. The world knows not what it loses by such a death.

Let not children be impatient at the length of life which their holy parents enjoy: You know not, children, what benefit ye may reap from their example, their counsel, their earnest prayers, and secret wrestlings with God for your souls: Let us have a care that we do nothing, that we may break the spirits of our pious friends, or that may hasten the departure of holy persons from this lower world, whose virtues and graces are of eminent use among us. Let us rather pray earnestly, that God would lengthen out the days of those who speak and act with a useful zeal for the honour of Christ, and for the welfare of the souls of men. When death once has put a period to their

* It was a custom in former days, for merchants in their books of accounts to have "Laus Deo, or Praise to God," written in the beginning of every leaf; and it stood on the head of the page in large and fair letters, to put them always in mind, that in their human affairs they should carry on a divine design for the glory of God.

days, all this sort of service is finished for ever; and we ourselves may sustain unknown loss by their speedy departure out of this world.

The Recollection.—" Is not this a strange doctrine which I have heard to-day, that a christian on earth has many privileges which can never belong to the saints in heaven? Is it not strange tidings to hear, that there are many graces to be exercised in this life, which neither saints nor angels can practise in the holy and heavenly world? And yet the evidence is so strong, and the truth is so plain and certain, that I see it, and I must believe it. Remember then, O my soul, thou hast one more motive to diligence in all the duties of life, than ever thou hadst before. And thou hast also one more support under all thy sorrows, beyond what thy former days were ever acquainted with. A delightful support it is under sufferings, and a noble motive to duty. Awake, awake, all my active powers, let every grace be in exercise, and every talent be employed to bring this revenue of honour to my God and my Saviour in this life, which the saints above cannot give him, and which, at the moment of death, must for ever cease.

Blessed Spirit, lead me to the practice of the most useful duties, that my service may be of a large extent both to God and man. Now let me study and contrive, wherein I may best promote the interest of Christ and his gospel here on earth. Let me bear the burdens of life with a holy satisfaction: Let me endure the fatigues of labour with a sacred pleasure: Let me resist the temptations, let me sustain the sorrows of life like a good soldier of Christ in the present field of battle. Heaven will have other business for me, and proper work of its own: That is the place of joy and triumph.

" Forgive, O my God, all my slothfulness in duty, and my impatience of suffering. Let this new and glorious motive possess my spirit powerfully, and influence all my future conduct, that when the messenger of death shall tell me, I must be employed in this sort of work no more, I may look back from the borders of eternity, and rejoice that I have been assisted by divine grace, to do so much for God on earth; and when I am called away from the present stage of action, I may be received by my great Master at the gates of heaven, with a *Well done good and faithful servant, come, enter into the joy of thy Lord.* Amen.

HYMN FOR SERMON XL.

THE PRIVILEGE OF THE LIVING ABOVE THE DEAD.

I.

AWAKE my zeal, awake my love,
And serve my Saviour here below,
In works which all the saints above,
Which holy angels cannot do.

II.

My faith and hope may see the Lord,
Though veils of darkness lie between:
Hope shall rest firm upon his word,
And faith rejoice in things unseen.

III.

Awake my charity, and feed
The hungry soul, and clothe the poor:
In heav'n are found no sons of need,
There all these duties are no more.

IV.

Subdue thy passions, O my soul,
Maintain the fight, thy work pursue,
Daily thy rising sins controul,
And be thy vict'ries ever new.

V.

The land of triumph lies on high,
There are no fields of battle there:
Lord, I would conquer till I die,
And finish all the glorious war.

VI.

Let ev'ry flying hour confess
I gain thy gospel fresh renown,
And when my life and labours cease,
May I possess the promis'd crown.

SERMON XLI.

DEATH IMPROVED TO OUR ADVANTAGE.

1 COR. iii. 22.

WHETHER LIFE OR DEATH—ALL ARE YOURS.

THE chief thing which the apostle has in his eye in these verses, is to represent the glory and grandeur, the treasures and possessions that every believer is a partaker of, by virtue of his interest in Christ; and to shew, that whatsoever persons or affairs a christian has to do with in the natural, the civil, and the religious life, they shall all turn to his benefit some way or other. All the circumstances that attend him while he continues here in this world, and even his departure out of it too, shall work for his good. Death is numbered among his possessions as well as life. Death may be terrible to flesh and blood, for it is a curse in its original nature and design, and sinners will find and feel the curse of it; but it is transformed into a blessing to the saints by the abounding grace of the gospel.

I confess, it is a christian's own death that the holy writer seems chiefly and most particularly to design and intend here: And this I shall most largely insist upon. But since death in all its circumstances and attendants, in all the extent of its dominion, and with all its power, is under the sovereign management of God our heavenly Father; it is constrained to subserve his kind and gracious purposes to his own people, in all its forms and appearances. And I think, upon this account, that I shall not transgress the apostle's great and general design, if I take the dreadful name of DEATH in its widest and most formidable extent of power, and with relation to all its victories; and shew how, even in this largest sense, it is appointed to subserve the glory of God, and the kingdom of Christ, and by the grace of the new covenant, it is rendered useful and beneficial to every true christian; on this account, therefore, it may be numbered amongst his possessions. *Death is yours.*

With this view I shall endeavour to run through these five general heads following, and improve each of them, in a few particulars, to the benefit of christians, agreeably to the design of my text.—Death is made useful to a saint, when we consider it,

I. As reigning over all mankind in general.

II. As seizing on impenitent and unpardoned sinners.

III. As taking captive the bodies of the saints.

IV. As depriving us of our dear relations and kindred. And,

V. As bringing our own bodies down to the dust.

I confess I was very unwilling to leave the death of Christ out of this catalogue; for his death is not only the most eminent blessing to every christian, but it is also the price that purchased all other blessings, in time and in eternity. It is the death of Christ that may be called the christian's richest treasure, for it procures for him all the treasures of grace and glory. It is the fruit of his death, that *all things are ours, whether*

Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or things present, or things to come. It is his death that gives truth and virtue to the words of my text, and to all the rich and spreading comments upon it, that faith can make here on earth, and that our souls shall taste and enjoy hereafter in heaven.

Yet when I consider that the death of Christ is more directly expressed in many other scriptures, and does not seem at all to have been the design of St. Paul in this text; and when I survey what a vast and copious subject I must enter into, if I recount the riches of blessing that are derived from this spring, I chuse to refer that subject to another season. I proceed therefore according to the order I have proposed, to treat of the various advantages to be derived from this proposition, *Death is yours.*

First, The death of mankind in general shall be made profitable to believers. The death of all the sons and daughters of Adam, shall promote the improvement of the children of God in knowledge, grace, and holiness; for it instructs them in three most useful lessons.

1. It gives them a most powerful and sensible lecture on the vanity of man. A burying-place filled with tombs is a lively book of human frailty: It repeats the melancholy lesson in every leaf. Each little grave-stone becomes a preacher of vanity to the living, even in the profound silence of the dead. This is the doctrine of every rising hillock, this is the universal theme: And every stately monument there strikes the beholder with the same mortifying truth; though perhaps it swells with many pompous titles and images of honour. And this lesson of vanity stands written there still in fair and indelible characters, though the name of the dead, and all their praises, be quite worn out. Dust and ashes, even without an inscription, and without a monument, are silent but powerful teachers.

Alas! what is man in his best estate! A poor and mortal dying creature! When we read the histories of past ages and foreign nations, and find that those whole nations and ages are all dead, and mingled with the dust, and even those who once made a great bustle and figure in this world, are now but an empty name, we cry out, "What vain creatures we are!" When we behold our neighbours and our acquaintance on the right hand, and on the left, dropping away all round us; when we see one following another daily down to the grave of silence, it is a very natural and just reflection, "Alas, how frail is man!" When we behold the young, the healthy, the fair, and the strong, the rich, and the powerful, together with the poor, the feeble, and the slave, all yielding to the common law of death, and turning into earth and rottenness, we have just occasion to cry out, "What a vain empty thing is human nature, even the best of it: A piece of pretty mouldering clay: These bodies of ours are fine and curious engines, but made of the dust, and to dust they return again."

This is the common state, situation, and view of things in all seasons, and in every generation. But when we fix our thoughts on some special seasons or causes of mortality, when we think of a famine or a pestilence that sweeps away thousands in a few days, that empties the whole streets in a night or two, and lays towns or cities desolate; when we read of wars and battles that overspread the mountains with slaughter, and cover vast plains with human carcases; when we hear of storms at sea that drown many hundreds at once, and perhaps some thousands sink down to death in their floating habitations, then we are more feelingly penetrated with a sense of our vanity, then we sigh and groan aloud, and break out into this mournful language, *O Lord! hast thou made*

all mankind in vain? Psalm lxxxix. 49. How awful is thy government! How terrible are thy judgments, thou Almighty Sovereign of life and death! The ancient saints have made such remarks often, and mixed these scenes of mortality with their pious thoughts, and turned them into devotion: They have drawn many serious and pathetic inferences from such meditations on death, and vented their musings of thought in holy language.

(1.) "Shall man compare himself with God? Mortal man *that dwelleth in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, and who is crushed before the moth! Shall he set himself to contend with the eternal God his Maker?*" Job iv. 17—19. Again:

(2.) "What little reason have we to be proud and boastful! Poor dying mushrooms, who start up for a few hours, but cannot assure ourselves of to-morrow! To-day we swell and look big among men, to-morrow we are a feast for worms. *Our days are as a hand's breadth; verily every man at his best estate is altogether vanity;*" Psalm xxxix. 5. Again:

(3.) "How vain and fruitless a thing is it to *put our trust in princes, or in the son of man, in whom there is no help? His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that very day, his thoughts perish;* Psalm cxlvi. 3, 4. Man is too weak a thing to encourage or support our confidence. And:

(4.) "What a necessary duty is it then to fix our constant dependance upon God, even in all the common affairs of life! *Let us not say therefore, that to-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain; whereas ye know not what will be on the morrow? For what is your life! It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away; for that ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live to do this or that;* James iv. 13—15. And it is the same inference that holy David makes more than once upon a survey of the mortality of man, in the Psalms just before cited, *Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in thee;* Psalm xxxix. 11. *Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God, who keepeth truth for ever;* Psalm xlvi. 5, 6. The Lord is an everlasting friend, he lives when creatures die, and fulfils his word of truth, when the words of princes perish with their breath."

2. The death of mankind in general shews us the dreadful evil and desert of sin. It discovers to us the awful holiness and terrible Majesty of God; and it teaches us what a sublime value he puts upon his own law, and how fearfully he avenges the violation of it. I join these three things together, because they stand so nearly connected in the divine economy.

(1.) The universal death of mankind shews us, what a dreadful and heinous evil there is in sin, and what wide destruction it has deserved. *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;* Rom. v. 12. *For the wages of sin is death;* Rom. vi. 23. Man was made innocent, and while he continued obedient, he was immortal: Transgression and death came in together: A formidable pair! Two dreadful names, big with mischief and ruin to human nature. When we see the dying agonies of poor mankind, our fellow-creatures, our brethren in flesh and blood, let us remember the sin of our common father, that first subjected him and all his posterity to death; and let us reflect upon the dreadful evil that is contained in the nature of every sin; for it deserves death at the hand of God. Alas! how often has the best of us deserved to die, for our transgressions have been multiplied without number.

(2.) The death of all mankind makes a solemn discovery to us of the terrible Majesty

of God, and the justice that attends his government. He will not pass by the guilt of his rebellious creatures, without a due resentment of their crimes. And even though he pardons the sins of his own people, so as to secure them from eternal vengeance, yet they must pass through death, that they may learn what an evil and bitter thing it is to have offended against their Maker and their God.

When we see a church-yard filled with little hills of mortality, the ruins of a parish, or a spacious town, and the dust of many generations, we naturally cry out, as in Deut. xxix. 24. *Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this land, and what meaneth the heat of all this great anger?* The next verse will give you an answer to it; yea, every man may answer himself, *because they have forsaken the Lord their God;* they have forsaken *his covenant of life, and sinned against him.* Those dreadful words, *In the day thou eatest, thou shalt die,* have been putting into execution almost six thousand years, and the *Lord's anger is not yet turned away, but his hand is stretched out still;* Isaiah v. 25. the vengeance of the Lord is not yet fully executed according to the just demerit of sin. Though saints are saved from the dismal consequences of death, yet God would not rescue them from dying, that they might always remember what sin deserved. Thus the death of all mankind discovers to us the awful Majesty of God our Maker, who will not be affronted by his creatures, without terrible resentment; he is a holy and a jealous God.

(3.) It teaches us the high value that God has for his own law, that he will rather dash a whole creation to pieces, than suffer his holy law to be insulted and broken, without some reparation of the honour of it. The race of Adam is doomed to death, for the sake of sin against this law, and mortality and a curse spread over this lower world. Let us inure our thoughts to such reflections as these, that we may ever keep our souls in awe of the Majesty of God, and dread the thoughts of breaking his law, which he values above a whole world of men. O that sin may become the most hateful object in our eyes; it is this that has laid cities desolate, and fills the graves; it is this that has corrupted and destroyed our natures; it has turned millions of strong and well-formed bodies into dust: It has ruined the most beautiful part of God's lower creation, and is sending thousands daily to the pit of corruption and noisome darkness. It is sin has filled our nature with diseases, and sown the poisonous seeds of mortality and death, in every son and daughter of Adam; a malignant and fatal poison, that has destroyed all the nations upon earth, and buried them under-ground, heaps upon heaps, in above a hundred successions! But I now go on to another distinct lesson, that the death of all mankind teaches us.

3. It informs us, in a very sensible and affecting manner, that we ourselves must shortly die, and awakens the soul to actual preparation for its departure. Heb. ix. 27. *It is appointed for all men once to die, and after death the judgment,* Joshua and David, saints and kings, tell us, they *go the way of all the earth:* "The grave is the house appointed for all the living;" *Job* xxx. 23. When we behold one after another, made of the same flesh and blood as we are, going down to the dust in a long continual succession, we have a solemn warning, that we must shortly follow: There is no ransom in this case, no hope of safety, no door of escape, and, as Solomon expresses it, *there is no discharge in this war;* Eccl. viii. 8.

A true christian takes notice of this with a pious awe upon his spirit; and when he is ready to grow drowsy and secure, the sight of a funeral, or a grave, shall rouse him out of his sleepy temper, and awaken religion into life again: When he hears of a neighbour's

death, he asks his own soul, "Art thou ready? For the next summons may come to call thee away into the world of spirits, to stand before God the Judge of all."

Thus a child of God reaps some advantage by the spreading empire of death over all mankind; he makes a sacred improvement of the terrible waste that the king of terrors has made over all the earth: He learns the vanity and emptiness of man in his best estate: He grows humble and dependant on the eternal God: He reads the dreadful evil of sin on every tomb-stone: The death of every man calls him aloud to prepare for his own, and to be in actual readiness for his entrance into the invisible world. Happy souls, who take this warning, and stand ever prepared!

But I proceed to the next general head which I proposed:

Secondly, As the death of mankind in general, gives these divine lessons to a saint, so the death of impenitent sinners, which hath something in it very terrible, may be turned to the advantage and profit of believers, these three or four ways:

1. If we are true christians, and persecuted and injured here on earth, then the death of the wicked delivers us from our enemies, and releases us from the wrath of our oppressors. In the grave *the wicked cease from troubling*, as well as *the weary are at rest;* Job iii. 17.

Look back to the distance of three thousand years, and see the children of Israel on the banks of the Red-sea, rejoicing in the Lord their deliverer, when an army of Egyptian carcases floated on the waters, or were cast up in heaps upon the shore: These were the cruel oppressors of the people of God: They were drowned in the evening, and the morning light discovered the havock that death had made, and the salvation it wrought for Israel, in the xiv. and xv. of Exodus. See the whole city of Jerusalem, and Hezekiah at the head of them, triumphing in the Lord, when he sent the angel of death, and destroyed the besiegers: *A hundred and fourscore and five thousand Assyrians lay dead on the border of the city;* Isaiah xxxvii. 36. *By terrible things in righteousness God answered the prayer of his saints;* Psalm lxv. 5. And at the death of Herod, the father and mother of our blessed Lord were glad, for they returned from their flight; they came from the land of Egypt, and dwelt in their own land again; and the child Jesus was saved from the murderous designs of that cruel man; *Matt.* ii. 19.

Such examples of advantage which the saints receive from the death of the men of violence, their impious and bloody enemies, are frequent in sacred history: And we may remark in our day, how many a time God hath saved us in Great Britain, when we have been on the borders of destruction, by the death of persecutors at home and abroad. The monarchs of the earth have been turned down to their graves, one year after another, and the churches of God, in many nations, have found rest and deliverance.

2. The death of impenitent sinners has been many a time the happy occasion of the conversion of a saint. There is many a holy soul, now in heaven, that was first awakened to fly from the wrath to come, by the death of some of his wicked companions in his younger years. When a snare falls suddenly, and seizes a little bird or two of the flock, the rest take wing toward heaven, and fly for safety. And happy are those souls who take the terrible warning, who fly to the sacred refuge, and lay hold on offered grace.

When a vile wretch is seized in the midst of his companions, and his sins, and sent down to hell and destruction in a moment, the very gates of hell seem to open before our faces, to receive the rebels; such a spectacle fills the hearts of those that are near

him with amazement and terror, and hath often been the first means of sending them to the throne of grace, and, by degrees, to the throne of heaven. The story of Peter Valdo is famous on this occasion, who was a rich merchant of Lyons in France, but had no sense of inward religion or true piety. When in the midst of feasting and merriment, he saw one of his companions struck with sudden death, he was awakened to serious thoughts of eternity: Upon this he applied himself to study the scripture, and discover the errors of the Roman church; he acquainted his friends with them, and instructed the poor, who were continual partakers of his bounty. Then being excommunicated by the popish clergy, he retired, with some of his disciples, to the valleys of Piedmont, where he found some christians of an ancient and primitive stamp, and joining with them, established those churches which are called the Vaudois, and are famous in history, even to this day.

Bishop Burnet also tells us, in the life of the lord chief justice Hale, that in his younger years he gave himself up to much frolic and vanity, till one of his loose companions fell down on a sudden, and they thought him dead: which surprizing providence sent Mr. Hale to his knees, to pray earnestly for the recovery of his companion, and laid a foundation for that life of eminent virtue and religion, which is described in those memoirs. Thus not only the death of profligate sinners, but even the appearance of their death, has been blessed to gracious purposes, for the conversion and salvation of others.

3. The death of the wicked gives the children of God glorious matter for praise to his distinguishing grace. When they see or hear of a hardened and impenitent sinner, cut off in his guilt and obstinacy, and in the pursuit of his lusts, the holy soul cries out with thankfulness and zeal, "Glory be to that grace which has made the difference betwixt him and me!"

And this is still more remarkable, when a sinner dies with all the terrors of God upon him, when the sting of death enters into his heart, and sharpens all his last agonies, when conscience is awakened with all its horrors, and the soul is plunging with its eyes open into a gulf of everlasting misery. O how sensibly does this affect the heart of a true christian! He stands and wonders, and adores that rich mercy that has snatched him as a brand out of the burning. "What am I," says he, "by nature more than another, that God should have called me by his grace, and given me repentance unto life, while this poor wretch continued obstinate and impenitent? We were both sons of Adam the sinner, alienated from the life of God, and enemies to all that is holy: We were both favoured with the means of grace, and sat under the ministrations of the same gospel. Who, or what am I better than my neighbour, that God should powerfully incline my heart to accept the offered salvation! That he should have prepared me as a vessel of mercy, to be filled with glory, while my old companion has now made himself a complete *vessel of wrath*, and fitted himself for swift destruction; *Romans* ix. 22, 23. By nature I was a *child of wrath*, as well as he, a rebel, and a vile transgressor, *without God*, without Christ, *and without hope:* And why was not I seized by divine justice, in those days of my rebellion, and made a sacrifice to the indignation of God? What merit was there in me, that I should be spared, while my companion suffered under speedy vengeance? Let the freedom and riches of grace be adored for ever: It was rich and sovereign grace that spared me: And now, through the abounding mercy of God, I hope I have fled to lay hold on the refuge set before me: my heart is, in some

measure, sanctified, my nature renewed, and my sins pardoned. Blessed be the Lord who hath given me *hope in death, while the wicked are driven away in their wickedness, driven far away* from hope and heaven;" *Prov.* xiv. 32.

4. The death of impenitent sinners does another service also for the saints, in that it sensibly excites their pity and their prayers for the living. It awakens the exercise of pious charity for the souls of their friends, that are yet *in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.* A true christian, that has tasted of the grace of God, can hardly be supposed to see his impenitent neighbour seized with sudden death, and sent away to darkness, but it touches the springs of holy tenderness within him, and constrains him to speak a word to others in the same danger, and to lift up a cry to God upon their account for grace and salvation. Surely that christian is not in a right temper of mind, who can see or hear of impenitent and guilty souls seized away from his neighbourhood or his acquaintance, and plunging into eternity with horror and despair, and yet have no compassion awakened in him, no bowels of pity moving for those of his acquaintance that are involved in the same iniquities, and are yet in the land of the living, and on this side hell. Such an awful providence is like a warning-word which heaven puts into our mouths, that we may echo it with solemn horror round the neighbourhood, and try to rouze stupid sinners from their dangerous and fatal lethargy.

Here is a proper pause in this Sermon, if it be too long to be read at once.

But it is time now to leave this general head, and go on to the next.

Thirdly. If the death of hardened sinners turns to the advantage of the saint, the death of fellow-christians shall certainly work for his benefit too.

You will be ready to say, "What? Can the loss of good men from the earth ever be turned into a benefit? Can the death of saints bring any advantage to the survivors?" Yes, surely, if they die like christians indeed, in the lively exercises of faith and hope; and this will appear in these four particulars:

1. It confirms our faith in the gospel of Christ, and supports our holy profession. It gives us an assurance of the truth and power of our religion, above all other religions in the world, when it enables a poor feeble dying creature to face death with courage, to look beyond the limits of life and time, and venture into an unseen world with holy joy and triumph. It gives us a glorious evidence, that the principles of christianity are such, as will justify all the labours of a holy life, and will bear us out in the profession of it, in the midst of ridicule and mockery, of persecution and martyrdom. This surely must be a religion coming down from God, that can give the weak and the unlearned such a courage, as to encounter death itself without fear; and that not from a stupid and senseless temper of spirit, not from a brutal hardiness, such as carries the horse and the hero into the battle, but with a clear and full discovery of God and his holiness, of our own sins and his forgiving grace, this religion can enable us to venture into his immediate presence. How glorious is our gospel, how divine a doctrine is this! It has wrought ten thousand such wonders by faith in the blood of Christ, as the great atonement for sin, and the only way to the Father.

A saint leaving this world, and putting off mortality, with the light of heaven breaking in upon his soul, and the beams of glory shining round about him, with divine joy and transport in his countenance, and the language of heaven upon his lips, brings the in-

visible world into present view: The pious spectators grow up to a sensible assurance of the glories and felicities of that invisible world: each of them sits on the borders of paradise, each of them gets a glimpse of the New Jerusalem, and all the heavenly country, and this adds new strength to his faith and hope.

2. The glorious death of our fellow-christians greatly encourages the imitation of their holy life. To see a child of God die from amongst men, leave this world with a holy contempt and sincere pleasure, and enter into the presence of his heavenly Father with a filial confidence; to see him finish his race with joy, and, as it were, lay hold on salvation, and put on his heavenly crown: This calls aloud upon us to tread in the same steps, to pursue the blessed prize, and to be *followers of them, who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises;* Heb. vi. 12. When we *mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, and see that his end is peace;* Psalm xxxvii. 37. we are animated to walk with God in the same uprightness, and to press after the same perfection. Having such *a cloud of witnesses* that have gone before us, and Christ our Lord at the head of them, *we run with patience the race that is set before us,* till we arrive at the promised glory; *Heb.* xii. 1.

To stand near the bed of a dying saint, and observe the sweet serenity of his soul under the agonies of his flesh, would force Balaam himself to say, *Let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his;* Num. xxiii. 10. But the christian goes further, and with holy zeal, and humble dependance upon divine grace, establishes himself in the ways of holiness: He resolves that he will live the life of the righteous too, and tread in the paths of piety with utmost watchfulness and care that he may lay a foundation for the same peaceful reflections on his death-bed, and the same joyful prospect.

3. The death of fellow-saints is for our benefit, as it weans us from this world, as it makes earth and this life less pleasant to us, and heaven more desirable. Every holy soul that leaves the world, carries away so much more grace and goodness from it. What would this world be if all the saints had left it, but a cage of unclean birds, a nest of serpents, a wilderness of savage beasts, a habitation of Satan, and his sons and daughters; a dwelling of devils, and a region of darkness a-kin to hell? Did not converting grace turn sinners into saints, and make a constant succession of christians, this would be the dismal character of this world in the space of one generation. But, blessed be God, as bad as this world is, divine grace is still at work, and makes it a sort of nursery for heaven by new conversions.

Yet still the death of the saints is the loss of so much of heaven out of our sinful world; and the fewer friends God has here, there will be the fewer communications between heaven and earth. The absence of Christ and his saints, spreads a sort of dim shadow over all the fairest colours of this lower creation; the beauties of it fade, and the flowers of it, in our esteem, languish and hang their head, because Jesus, and so many of his holy ones, are departed. When we see one pious friend after another, taking their leave of us, and ascending to the upper world, we are ready to say, "What should we stay here for? Our God is on high, our Saviour is on high, multitudes of our friends are departed from us, and dwell on high. Farewel earth, and time, and sensible things: We long to be with our best friends, and with our God; we are ready, O Jesus, for thy first summons; take us when thou pleasest into heaven and eternity."

4. The comfortable death of a saint instructs us how to die, and makes death easy.

When we see and hear a fellow-christian examining his heart, searching his soul to the bottom, turning all his secret thoughts outward, and looking over the past conduct of his life; when we behold him reviewing his own follies and iniquities, and recalling to mind also all his sacred transactions with God; when we see him surveying all these most important concerns in the light of the last judgment, and, as it were, under the piercing rays of the great tribunal; when we hear him abasing himself to the dust in the most villifying expressions, because of his sins, and yet rejoicing in the evidences of his graces, and repeating the promises of the gospel with a pleasant hope; this teaches us to converse with our own souls in a more lively manner, about sin and forgiveness, about death and eternity; for it brings these awful themes into open view, and sets them before us in their infinite importance. This reads us a glorious lecture upon the gospel of Christ, and pardoning grace, and the sanctifying Spirit, and the hope of glory, beyond what we ever found before in the best of sermons, and under the warmest preachers.

Come, my friends, come into the chamber of a dying christian, come, approach his pillow, and hear his holy language; "I am going up to heaven, and I long to be gone, to be where my Saviour is. *Why are his chariot-wheels so long a coming?* Then with both arms stretched up to heaven, I desire to be with God. I hope I am a sincere christian, but the meanest, and the most unworthy: I know I am a great sinner; but did not Christ come to save the chief of sinners? I hope I shall find acceptance in Christ Jesus. I have trusted in him, and I have strong consolation. I have been looking into my own heart, what are my evidences for heaven? Has not the scripture said, *He that believeth shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life;* John iii. 16. Now, according to the best knowledge I have of what faith is, I do believe in Christ, and I shall have life everlasting. Does not the scripture say, *He that hungereth and thirsteth after righteousness, shall be satisfied;* Matt. v. 6. Surely I hunger and thirst after it, I desire to be holy, I long to be conformable to God, and to be made more like him; shall I not then be satisfied! I love God, I love Christ, I desire to love him more, to be more like him, and to serve him in heaven without sin. I have faith, I have love, I have repentance, yet I boast not, for I have nothing of myself, I speak it all to the honour of the grace of God, it is all grace: I say then, I have faith, and repentance, and love; but faith and repentance are all nothing without Christ; it is he makes all acceptable to the Father, and I trust in him. My friends, I have built on this foundation Jesus Christ, he is indeed the only foundation: Have you not built on the same foundation too? This is my hope. Is it not your hope also? Dear brother, I shall see you at the right-hand of Christ: There I shall see our friends that are gone a little before: I shall be with them first before you. I thank you, my friends, for all your offices of love; you have prayed with me, you have refreshed me, I love and honour you now, but I shall meet you in heaven, I go to my God and your God, to my Saviour and your Saviour."*

Would one think there could be so much pleasure in the dying chamber of a beloved friend? Surely this makes good the words of my text, if we are christians, death is ours. O this is a divine entertainment that refreshes our spirits! And while sorrow trickles from our eyes for the loss of a departing christian friend; there is a sympathy

* These are some of the dying words of the Reverend Mr. Samuel Rosewell, when, with some other friends, I went to visit him two days before his death, and which I transcribed as soon as I came home, by their assistance.

of joy that works powerfully at the heart, and the heaven within us breaks out and shines through our tears. Then, with a wonderous mixture of the painful and the pleasant, with a sweet confusion of pious passions, we bid our dying brother, " Farewel."

At such a season as this, our thoughts are led upward to heaven, and forward to the great resurrection. We open the eye of faith, and see the holy soul ascending to God; we behold the weak and languishing body rising glorious out of the grave, shaking off the dust, and putting on its immortality: While our faith attends the spirit of our departing friend to heaven, we grow willing and desirous to be gone too; and being brought so near to the gates of glory, we would fain take our leave of mortal things, and accompany the expiring saint to the joyful world of spirits. The memory of such a scene, and such a hour, will dwell upon our thoughts long, and support our own hope of victory, when we shall be called to conflict with the same enemy. Having such a witness gone before us, we shall not only *run our race with patience*, through all the stages of it, but *finish our course with joy?*"

There is a sacred courage derived many times to a weak believer, by attending the last moments of a dying saint ascending to the upper world. " I was afraid of death, says a feeble christian, till I saw my neighbour die: He was once a sinner as well as I, and he had his imperfections and failings in this life, as I have mine; I humbly hope I have practised the same repentance as he has done, I have trusted in the same Saviour, I have ventured my all upon the same gospel, and travelled on in the same path: surely there is forgiveness for me too; surely the sting of my death shall be taken away also; and, through grace, I shall join in his triumph; *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?* 1 Cor. xv. 55.

This observation has been most gloriously exemplified in the death of martyrs; when the spectators that have been heathens, or but almost christians, have been strangely animated to profess the gospel boldly, while they have seen the most amazing courage of these glorious sufferers for Christ. And those that have been doubtful and trembling believers, whose faith was wavering, and who were ready to let go their profession, have ventured through blood and torments, and death, with a divine resolution, when they have beheld the martyrs meet the same death and torments with a sacred bravery of soul.

A multitude of fearful christians may be animated and encouraged to travel through the dark valley, and to cross the cold flood of death, by the example of a single saint, who has passed that important hour with success and honour. So you have seen a flock of sheep stand doubtful and delaying on the bank of some little brook; but when the first and second have made their way through it, the rest venture over in multitudes, and leap the ditch with the greatest ease: the difficulty and the danger vanish at once, when they have seen a forerunner leading the way.

Thus it hath been made evident in several instances, that the death of fellow-christians is ours. It shall turn to our great advantage, through the influences of the gospel, and the Spirit of grace, where christians die like themselves, in the exercise of a joyful hope. It confirms our faith in the gospel of Christ, it encourages our imitation of their holy life, it makes earth and this life less pleasant to us, and heaven more desirable, and it instructs us how to die.

But if a saint go out of this world under much darkness and terror, this is commonly to be supposed a divine chastisement for the criminal indulgence of some temptation, or

some unwatchful steps he has taken in the course of his life; for God will make his own people know, many times by painful experience, that it is an evil and bitter thing to backslide and depart from him. A wise and pious spectator, upon this occasion, will take warning by the terrors of the Lord, and by the punishment of his fellow-christian, to avoid that guilt and those criminal indulgences, which have provoked God to leave his brother to darkness, even in the hour of death: And this may be a means to awaken him to a most watchful course of holiness, lest he fall under the same strokes of anger from his heavenly Father, and suffer his displeasure in that awful moment, when he would most earnestly wish for the sweetest sense of his love. Thus I have finished the third general head, and shewed that the death of the saints may be richly improved to the advantage of the living.

The Recollection.—"Come, my soul, who art daily conversing with the affairs and concerns of life, come now, and meditate on the name of death: It is a name that carries much terror in it to nature; come, and see whether thou canst not derive a blessing from it, by the instructions of the gospel, and the aids of grace. Thou hast heard the lessons that the death of mankind in general should teach thee: Enquire now what thou hast learned of them: Hast thou seen the vanity of man as a mortal dying creature? It is an easy matter to say, 'Alas, we must all die!' But hast thou felt the penetrating force of this truth? And does it influence thy whole conduct? Art thou not still, at every turn, putting thy confidence in one creature or another, whose breath is in his nostrils, and whose death disappoints thy hope? Or hast thou removed thy dependance from all creatures to God, and fixed thy hope in him that lives for ever? O blessed effect of the meditation on death!

"Again, Hast thou seen the heinous evil of sin in the spreading desolation that death has made over this lower world? Remember that it received its commission from the justice of God, almost six thousand years ago, and from his law which sin had broken: The dreadful execution proceeds to this day, and it will proceed till there be no sinner upon earth. Sin is the spring of all this havock of the lives of men. It is sin that has deserved all these tremendous executions of wrath: And yet, O my soul, how often hast thou indulged this mischief to play about thy bosom, like a harmless thing? Come, view the dismal effects of it, in the death of millions, and learn to hate and renounce it for ever. It is no small evil that could awaken the indignation of God at this rate, and diffuse it so widely, over so large and so glorious a part of his creation, as the whole nature and race of man.

"Again, I would enquire, has the death of mankind taught me effectually, that I must shortly die? And have I been excited to make a suitable provision for this awful and important hour, since I must not, I cannot escape it? Not only the death of mankind in general, but the death of wicked men, may instruct me in some useful lessons too. Here I learn how God rescues his children from the rage of oppressors, when he smites them down to death, and lays all their fury silent in the dust. Thus death itself becomes a deliverer to the saints, by destroying their cruel persecutors. I learn also, that when early or sudden death has seized a bold sinner, it is a loud warning-word to all his companions. When I see such terrible examples in the course of providence, let my soul stand in awe and fear.

"And if God has distinguished me by his mercy, if he has pardoned my guilt, and sanctified my corrupt nature; if he has made me one of his own children, and prepared

me for dying, when he summons others away unpardoned, unsanctified, unprepared, let all my powers be excited to bless the name of the Lord for his saving love. I was also a child of sin and wrath, but divine grace has made the difference. It is grace that has snatched me from the very brink of the pit of hell, and is training me up for heaven. And while I adore thy distinguishing mercy, O my God, to me, I would pity and pray for poor heedless and regardless sinners, that are following one another in a dismal succession down to the gates of death. O may their eyes and souls be awakened in their day of life and hope, lest death seize them, and send them farther down to everlasting darkness and despair! But if such lessons as these may be derived from the death of sinners, how much more benefit may be drawn from the dying hours of a sincere christian, especially if his heart be strong, and his faith lively!

"Here I see the gospel of Christ in some of its power and glory, when I see a christian under all the weaknesses and languishings of nature, meeting death without terror, and *overcoming his last enemy by the blood of the Lamb.* I see the saint all serene and peaceful, even in the agonies of dying nature, and amidst the sorrows of lamenting friends. He has heaven in view, and he bids farewel to earth with holy joy: Shall I not imitate the faith and holiness of his life, which laid a foundation for so peaceful and glorious a death? Do I not feel my soul a little more weaned from the world, since such a pious friend has left it? Has not death lost some of its frightful appearances, since I have actually seen it conquered? Do I not feel my heart panting and breathing toward the society above, since I have another friend gone thither? Does it not seem a more easy thing to me to lay down this tabernacle, to part with flesh and blood, and to venture into those unseen regions, since I have beheld my fellow-christian go before me? He has made the great and solemn experiment, and surely I should have courage to follow: He has given evident proof, that there is a sacred power in the gospel, the promises and the grace of Christ, to convey the soul safe through the dark shadow of death, without surprize and consternation: And has not my soul the same rich encouragements, the same promises of grace, and the same gospel of hope?

"O my Redeemer, and my Lord, hear a humble suppliant, influence my soul by thy rich grace, to keep my faith awake, my conscience undefiled, and my evidences for heaven ever bright and clear: And when my appointed hour comes, that solemn and final hour, "*let me die the death of the righteous*, and my departure be like his;" *Num.* xxiii. 10. Is death an enemy to nature, and does it carry terror in the name? Yet since thou hast subdued this enemy, and taken it captive, to serve the purposes of thy love; since thou hast numbered it, and written it down among the possessions of thy people; since thou hast taught so many of thy followers to triumph over it; let me also, blessed Jesus, let me be enabled to meet it with holy fortitude, and a lively hope. O let me follow *the footsteps of the flock* into the world of spirits, with a sacred pleasure, though it be through a dark passage. And as those who went before me have taught me to dare to die, so let my dying moments encourage those who come after me, to venture into death at thy call, without terror, and without reluctance." *Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMON XLI.

DEATH OF MANKIND, SAINTS AND SINNERS, IMPROVED.

I.

HAS death such vast destruction made?
Does every hour increase the dead?
Here I behold the guilt of sin,
That brought this spreading mischief in.

II.

Great God! How awful and how just
Thy law, that turns our flesh to dust!
O let me learn how frail am I,
And all my life prepare to die.

III.

When impious wretches yield their breath,
And go unpardon'd down to death,
Awake my soul, adore the grace,
That gave thee a repenting space.

IV.

But when a saint with cheerful air,
Meets his last foe, and feels no fear,
Our faith, our hope, and courage grow;
We learn to face the tyrant too.

V.

We could renounce our all things here,
And wish that moment would appear,
When we shall leave this world, and rise
To meet the joys above the skies.

SERMON XLII.

THE DEATH OF KINDRED IMPROVED.

1 COR. iii. 22.

WHETHER LIFE OR DEATH—ALL ARE YOURS.

HAPPY and immortal had Adam been, and all his children, if he had not ventured to break the command of his Creator: Life had been theirs in the most glorious sense of it; and death had not been known. But when sin entered into the world, death followed close behind it, according to that just and solemn threatening, *In the day thou eatest, thou shalt surely die;* Gen. ii. 17. And what a dismal havock has this enemy made amongst the inhabitants of our world! It has strewed the earth with carcases, and turned millions of human bodies into dust and corruption. The very name of death spreads a terror through all nature: But as dreadful and formidable as it is in itself, the grace of Christ makes a blessing of it, and sanctifies it to the advantage of his own people.

In the former discourse on this subject, we have learned some divine lessons from death, in its widest extent of dominion. The death of all mankind yields some special advantage to a saint: He is taught to reap some benefit from the death of impenitent sinners, though it carry along with it such a fearful train of attendants, and draw after it a long eternity of torments. He knows how to derive some advantage from the death of his fellow-christians; and whether they die in the joy of faith, and serenity of spirit, or whether their sun sets in a cloud, and fears and doubts attend them in that important hour, still he is taught to profit by it. In these three instances it appears that death is ours; death is, in this respect, made the treasure and property of a christian, as he is instructed to improve it, to his own sacred interest, and to the welfare of his soul. We proceed now to the

Fourth general head, and shall endeavour to shew how the death of our relations and kindred in the flesh shall turn to our benefit.

I. It shews us the emptiness and insufficiency of our dearest created comforts, of all blessings that are not immortal.

We have lost, perhaps, an inferior relation, a son, a daughter, a nephew, a pleasing entertainment and comfort of life: But death tells us, it was a poor dying comfort, a pretty piece of brittle clay, broken and dissolved, and mouldering to the dust. Our love and our grief, it may be, join together, to recal the past days of fondness and delight, short-lived delight and empty vain fondness, that ends in tears and long mourning! We have lost a superior relation, or perhaps an equal, a father, a wife, a husband, or a brother: We have lost a guide, a support, a helper, a dear affectionate friend, entirely loving, and entirely beloved.

He was a kind and skilful guide, but death teaches us the insufficiency of his

guidance, who left us in the midway, and lets us travel through all the remaining part of this dark wilderness alone. He has given us sweet counsel and direction in days past, but he can now direct us no more, we can consult him no more: Those lips of advice, on which we hung, are closed and silent in death: That voice will be heard no more: We must walk without this counsellor all the rest of our way, be it never so long, and never so dangerous.

He was our helper and our support under daily difficulties; but it was a weak support, that could not stand himself, when death shook him: A poor helper, and a sorry defence, that could not resist the powers of disease and mortality, nor defend himself from the assaults of death.

He was a friend, and a faithful one too; but it was a feeble, a failing friend, even in the midst of his love and faithfulness; for he was called away, and constrained to depart from us in a dark and sorrowful minute, and hath left us to mourn alone. He could not abide with us a moment beyond his summons; he forsook us while we were drowned in grief, and could give us no more consolation. *Our fathers, where are they? Our prophets,* our instructors, our guides, and helpers, are gone down to the land of silence, they lie asleep in the dust and darkness; *Zech.* i. 5.

Thus death is made of advantage to us, even when it strikes us in so tender a part: For it teaches us this sacred lesson, how vain and empty are all our hopes in creatures! The dart of death is like a pen of iron in his hand, and he writes emptiness and vanity on every friend, on every relative that he takes from our family, from our side, from our bosom: He writes it in deep and painful characters, and holds our souls to the solemn lesson. The same truth stands written in many a part of the book of God, in divine and golden letters: but perhaps we would never have learned it, had not death copied it out for us in letters of blood.

II. The death of our kindred drives us to a more immediate and constant dependance on God. When the stream is cut off, what should we do but run to the fountain? If the stars vanish, we seek the sun-beams. And O may the sun arise, and shine upon our souls with growing light and comfort as the stars disappear!

While our friends or kindred were alive, we made them our refuge in every distress; we have trusted in them perhaps too much; we have lived too much upon them, with the neglect of God. A parent, a brother, or perhaps a dearer relative; these were our high tower, our defence, our sun, and our shield: These assumed that station in our hearts, and that high place in our esteem, which is due to God only. But when this tower is battered down to dust, when the shield of clay is broken to pieces, and this dim and feeble sun turned into darkness, then we make God alone our sun, our shield, and our high tower of defence. Then we search out earnestly what kind and condescending characters and relations God has assumed in his word; and we read and survey the gracious titles of our Lord Jesus Christ, with new and unknown delight.

Have any of you lost your earthly parents? Then you read with pleasure those words of the Psalmist, *If my father or my mother forsake me,* as they must do at the hour of death, then the Lord will take me up; *Psalm* xxvii. 10. And you rejoice in that glorious promise, *Be ye separate from idols,* saith the Lord; that is, separate yourselves from the sinful practices of the world, *and I will receive you, and I will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and my daughters, saith the Lord Almighty;* 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.

Has death entered into a family, and taken the head, the husband away? The words of Isaiah grow sweeter than ever. Isaiah liv. 5. *Thy Maker is thy husband, the Lord of hosts is his name, even the God of the whole earth.* Are the widows and the fatherless children in danger of oppression, because they have lost their defender? They run to the lxviii. *Psalm*, and live upon the 5th verse of it; *A Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation.* Is a brother summoned away by the stroke of death? But the Lord Jesus is alive still: He that took flesh and blood upon him, that he might be made like the rest of the children of God: *He is not ashamed to call them brethren;* Heb. ii. 11. This is a *brother* that was *born for* the day of *our adversity;* this is the *friend that sticks closer than a brother*, and abides with us when a brother departs, according to the expression of the wise man; *Proverbs* xvii. 17. and xviii. 24. Thus the names, and characters, and relations of God the Father, and of our Lord Jesus Christ, acquire a new sweetness, and appear with greater love and glory in them, at the death of our earthly relatives.

There is many a christian can speak feelingly, and say, "Never did I live so much upon my God; I never knew nor loved my Saviour so well, never conversed so much with his word, never did I find such sweetness in his names, nor his promises, nor such pleasure in secret converse with him, as I have done since the day I lost such a friend, or such a dear relation by the stroke of death: I have learned now to put no trust in creatures; *for their breath goeth forth, and that very day their thoughts of kindness perish;* Psalm cxlvi. 3—8. *Now refuge fails me, no man* seems to be *concerned for me*, since the death of such a friend; *I say*, therefore, *to my God, thou art my refuge;*" Psalm cxliii. 4, 5.

III. The death of our dearest friends calls us to a noble trial of our love to God, and our submission to his sovereignty. Human nature indeed is afraid of trials; but when the present aids of divine grace give us the victory, then *blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him;* James i. 12. And upon this account, he exhorts christians in the second *verse*, to a very sublime and difficult practice, *My brethren count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing this, that the trial of your faith worketh patience*, and if it endures the trial, *it will be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ;* 1 Pet. i. 7.

When God sends his messenger of death, and takes a dear and beloved creature from our arms, or our bosom, the divine question is like that of our Lord to Peter, *Simon, lovest thou me?* John xxi. 15—17. "Christian, *lovest thou me more than* thou lovest this creature? Art thou willing to resign this comfort at my call? Hast thou not given thyself to me, and does thy heart refuse to give up thy son, thy brother, or thy dearest friend? Hast thou not called me thy sovereign? I am come now to enquire into thy sincerity. Dost thou resign thy most beloved objects to my disposal? I gave up my Son to death for you; and have you any thing so dear to you as my Son was to me? What says your heart in answer to these solemn questions? Do you love me above all things or no? Is your will bowed down to my foot? Can you now repeat from your very souls the same language in which you have often addressed me in your closets, and in my sanctuary, "I am thine, Lord, I am thine; all that I have is thine?" Or do you murmur and quarrel at my providence, when I send my servant death to your house, to try whether these professions of yours were sincere or no?

Happy the christian that comes off with honour in this hour of trial, and who can say heartily, Lord, I resign what thou demandest, and am angry with myself that I should find so much reluctance in my heart to surrender any thing at the call of God! What a shining evidence of our sincerity is obtained at such a season! What a noble proof of our supreme love to God! And it shall be recorded in heaven for our honour, and produced in the day of the Lord Jesus!

There is nothing in all the history of Abraham, the father of the faithful, that gives him a more shining character on earth, or perhaps in heaven, than that he gave up his son Isaac, at the command of God, and *took the wood, and the fire, and the knife in his hand*, and devoted his beloved, his only son to death; though it was in a way so terribly painful and so shocking to nature, that he himself must be the executioner. He had offered the precious sacrifice already in his heart, when the angel of the Lord came down and stopped his hand: Now I know that thou fearest God, and I know that thou lovest him too, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thy only son from me; *Genesis* xxii. 9—12.

Thus the death of the dearest relation turns greatly to our advantage, when it gives us so bright an evidence of our own graces, and assures us that we are hearty lovers of God.

IV. The death of a beloved relative has often wrought for the good of a saint, when the long and painful sorrow which has attended it, has shewn us how dangerous a thing it was to love a creature too well.

"O! what a wound do I feel at my heart, says a christian, since the death of so near a relation: It pains me all the day: It fills my eyes with tears, and forbids my rest in the night: I am so troubled that I cannot sleep: It unfits me for the present duties of life, and hangs too heavy upon me, in the midst of the duties of religion. Surely that creature dwelt too near my heart, and was joined in too close a union, since my heart bleeds and smarts so long after the parting stroke. Let me watch my affections for time to come, and set a guard upon my love, that it never, never tie my soul so fast to a creature again. Come down, blessed Saviour, and take faster hold of my heart; let thy own hand heal the wound that death has made, and let thy mercy pardon the guilt of my excessive creature-love: Dwell thou in my soul, my Lord and my God, and fill up all the unhappy and painful vacancy: Keep my affections for ever true to thee, and let my love to thee be supreme and unrivalled; nor let the softer passions of my nature wander and lose themselves amongst creatures again, lest they contract new guilt; lest they provoke thee to repeat the same smarting tragedy, and to renew these scenes of mourning."

V. The death of our kindred is for our advantage, when it awakens us to review our own conduct toward them, whether we have behaved aright or no, and when it quickens our duty to surviving relatives.

While they are alive, and present with us, our neglect of duty towards them does not so soon strike our consciences; but when the stroke of death divides them from us in this world for ever, we are ready then to bethink ourselves, whether our carriage toward them has been just and kind: And if our enquiry finds out our guilt, our hearts are tender at that season, and we soon yield to the conviction. "Did I pay that duty to a father which he well deserved, and which God required? Did I treat a mother with that

filial affection and submissive tenderness that became a child? Did I pay that just deference and honour to the counsels and advice of my parents as I should have done? Did I treat my sisters with that decent affection and respect that became me: And did I exercise brotherly love toward all my equal relatives? Or has my conduct been undutiful, unkind, and unbecoming?"

And especially if we have this to charge ourselves with, that we took no care for the welfare of the souls of those that are dead. Such thoughts as these will hang heavy about the heart, and press hard upon the conscience in that day. "Did I not see my child or my brother walk in the ways of sin: and yet did I ever give him a hint of his dreadful danger? Did I fear that he was a stranger to the grace of God, and yet did I not neglect to invite him to receive the gospel? Had I not reason to question whether he was a sincere convert or no? But how little have I done toward his conversion!

"Or if he was ever concerned about the affairs of his soul, and awakened and thoughtful about death and hell, did I direct him in the way of peace? Did I endeavour to lead him to Jesus the Saviour? Or did I let him go on without instruction, and without comfort, till death laid its cold hands upon him, and he plunged into the eternal world at a mournful uncertainty? O my heart, my heart! The anguish of it pains me beyond what I am able to bear. O that I could recal my brother or my son from the grave! How would I follow him with counsels and intreaties, and neither give him nor myself any rest, till I had good hope, through grace, that he had fled for refuge to lay hold on Christ and his salvation. I would never be at ease, nor would I cease pleading for him at the throne of grace, till I had found some evidences of a new nature in him, and a change of heart from sin to repentance and holiness.

"Or suppose my departed relative was a true christian, what did I do toward the increase of his faith? Did I ever allure him to holy conversation? Did I take occasion now and then to introduce religious discourse? Did I converse with him ever about the matters of our common salvation, that, as iron sharpens iron, so we might have quickened each other's zeal and love, and helped each other onward in our way to heaven.

"Surely I have found myself too guilty in some of these instances. Forgive my criminal negligence, O my God, and through thy grace I will apply myself to double diligence, with regard to my relatives that yet survive: I will enquire, as far as it is proper, into the state of their souls: I will seek the most powerful and the kindest methods to awaken the thoughtless sinners amongst them; and I will study, and pray, and ask God what I shall say to make a deep impression upon their hearts: And though I have no office in the church, yet what I have learned there, I will talk over at home: I will preach Christ crucified, and all his gospel to them, as God shall give me proper opportunity. I will converse more freely with my pious kindred about the things of God, and learn their inward sentiments of religion and experimental godliness. Thus will I bring holy discourse into the parlour and the chamber; and every soul in my house shall be a witness of my endeavours to promote the eternal welfare of those that are near me."

Now when the death of a near relation attains such an end as this, and raises our repentance and holy zeal at this rate, we cannot doubt but that we receive sensible advantage by it.

VI. The death of our friends, who were truly religious, inclines us to review their instructions and their virtues, and sets them before our eyes, in a fresh and lively manner, to influence our own practice.

We are too ready to forget their advice while they are living and daily present with us, and we take too little notice of those virtues in which they were eminent. We beheld their humility toward God and men, their condescension to their inferiors, their love and hearty friendship toward their equals, and their sweetness of temper toward all around them. We beheld it, and perhaps we loved and honoured them for it; but we took but little pains to copy after them. We saw their pity to the poor and the miserable, their charity to persons of different sects and sentiments in religion; their readiness to forgive those that offended them, and their good-will and obliging carriage to all men. There was a beauty and loveliness in this conduct, that rendered them amiable indeed; but how little have we transcribed of their example, either into our hearts or our lives! We observed their constant tenderness of conscience, their devotion toward God, and their zeal for the honour of Christ, and his gospel in the world. O that we had made these graces the matter of our imitation! What can we do now more to honour their memory, than to speak and live, and act like them?

It may be we have got their pictures drawn by some skilful hand, and their images hang round us in their best likeness, as tender memorials of what we once enjoyed, to give us now and then a melancholy delight, and awaken in us the pleasing sadness of love. These we call our most precious pieces of furniture, and our hearts rate them at an uncommon price. But it would be much richer furniture for our souls to have the best likeness of our pious predecessors and kindred copied out there. Let us now and then reflect what were their peculiar virtues, and the remarkable graces that adorned them; and if we could imagine the spirit of each of them to look down upon us, through those eyes which the pencil has so well imitated, and to speak through those lips, each of them would say, in the language of the softest and most sacred affection, *Be ye followers of me as dear children*, so far *as I was a follower of Christ.*

And this thought I would more especially impress on those who were most unhappily negligent of the pious counsel of their ancestors, or ran counter to their holy advice and example in their life-time. "I was too regardless, may a young christian say, of the wise and weighty sayings of my father deceased, they return now upon my thoughts, with a fresh and living influence. I have been too ready to neglect what a kind mother taught me; but the instructions that I received from her dying lips, had such an air of solemnity and tenderness in them, that they have made a deep impression upon my heart; and I hope I shall never forget them. The prudent and pious rules that my elder relations have often set before me, recur to my thoughts with double efficacy since their death: I shall hear them speak no more, I shall see their holy examples no more: I will gather up the fragments of their religious counsels, and make them the rule of my conduct: I am well assured their souls are happy, and by the grace of God I will tread in their steps, till I arrive at those blessed regions, where I hope to meet them."

This thought leads me on to the last instance of benefit which we derive from the death of our kindred in the flesh.

VII. The death of dear and near relations calls our thoughts in a more powerful and sensible manner, to converse with the grave and eternity.

When our neighbours, or our common acquaintance die, we attend the funeral, and cast an eye into the grave; we spend a thought or two on the pit of corruption, and the mouldering dust: We awaken a meditation or two on things heavenly and the world to come; and we return quickly, and busily to this world again: But when God sends

death into our chambers, and it makes a slaughter there, it awakens us more effectually from a drowsy frame, and it nails our thoughts down to our most important and everlasting concerns. "Part of me is gone to the dust already, it is not long ere the surviving part shall go also. Death has smitten the desire of my eyes, and the partner of my joys, it will strike me ere long, and am I ready?" This thought dwells upon the heart of a true christian at such a season, and while the Spirit of God assists the work, it is not in the power of all the trifles in this earth to banish the holy thought, and carnalize the mind again. As when a man is seized with the dead palsy, or has a limb cut off, and buried in the dust, how sensibly does this awaken in him the thought of death and futurity! "The sentence of death is begun to be executed on me already, and the whole execution will be quickly fulfilled; it is time now to be ready, for death is in good earnest, and has begun his work."

And if our departed relative were a christian indeed, and gave us comfortable hope in his death, then it leads our thoughts naturally to heaven, and most powerfully touches the springs of our heavenly hopes. It raises our pious wishes to the upper world, and we say, as Thomas did at the death of Lazarus, *Let us go, that we may die with him;* John xi. 16. Let us go to our God and our holy kindred, and enjoy their better presence there. Let us not *sorrow for the dead as those that mourn without hope;* 1 Thess. iv. 13. but look upward to things unseen, and forward to the great rising-day, and rejoice in the promised and future glories that are beyond life and time.

Every dear relative that dies and leaves us, gives us one motive more to be willing to die: Their death furnishes us with one new allurement toward heaven, and breaks off one of the fetters and bonds that tied us down to this earth. Alas! we are tied too fast to these earthly tabernacles, these prisons of flesh and blood. We are attached too much to flesh and blood still, though we find them such painful and such sinful companions. We love to tarry in this world too well, though we meet with so many weaning strokes to divide our hearts from it. O it is good to live more at a loose from earth, that we may be ready for the parting hour: Let us not be angry with the sovereign hand of God that breaks one bond after another; though the strokes be painful, yet they loosen our spirits from this cottage of clay; they teach us to practise a flight heaven-ward in holy meditations and devout breathings; and we learn to say, *How long, O Lord, how long?*

The Recollection.—"Have any of us lately felt such parting strokes as these? Have we lost any of our beloved kindred? God calls upon us now, and enquires, "What have you learned of these divine lessons?" I would ask myself this day, Have I seen the emptiness and the insufficiency of creatures, and recalled my hope and confidence from every thing beneath and beside God? Have I past through this solemn hour of trial well, and shewn my supreme love to God, and my most entire submission to his sovereignty, by resigning so dear a comfort at his demand? Have I been taught by the inward pain which I felt at parting, and by the smart which still remains, how dangerous a thing it is to love a creature too well? Have I duly considered my past conduct toward my relations deceased, and does it approve itself to my conscience at the review? Or have I found matter for self-condemnation and repentance? Have I treasured up the memory of their virtues in my heart, and set them before me as the copy of my life? Have my thoughts followed the soul of my dear departed friend, and traced it with pleasure to the world of blessed spirits; and does my own soul seem to fix its hope and joy there, and to dwell

there above? Are my thoughts become more spiritual and heavenly; Do I live more as a borderer on the other world, since a piece of me is gone thither? And am I ready for the summons, if it should come before to-morrow?

"Happy christian, who has been taught by the Spirit of grace to improve the death even of the dearest relative to so divine an advantage. The words of my text are then fulfilled experimentally in you: *Death is yours:* Death itself is made a part of your treasures. The parting stroke is painful indeed, but it carries a blessing in it too; for it has promoted your heavenly and eternal interest." *Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMON XLII.

DEATH OF KINDRED IMPROVED.

I.

MUST friends and kindred drop and die?
Must helpers be withdrawn?
While sorrow, with a weeping eye,
Counts up our comforts gone.

II.

Be thou our comfort, mighty God,
Our helper and our friend;
Nor leave us, in this dang'rous road,
Till all our trials end.

III.

O may our feet pursue the way,
Our pious fathers led!
While love and holy zeal obey
The counsels of the dead.

IV.

Let us be wean'd from all below;
Let hope our grief dispel;
Death will invite our souls to go
Where our best kindred dwell.

SERMON XLIII.

DEATH A BLESSING TO THE SAINTS.

1 COR. iii. 22.

WHETHER LIFE OR DEATH,——ALL ARE YOURS.

WE have already seen many divine comforts, and a rich variety of blessings, derived from the formidable name of DEATH: One would scarce have thought that a word of so much terror should have ever been capable of yielding so much sweetness; but the gospel of Christ is a spring of wonders: It has consecrated all the terrible things in nature, even death itself, and every thing beside sin, to the benefit of the saint.

Death, in all its appearances, may furnish the mind of a believer with some sacred lesson of truth or holiness. When it appears in the extent of its dominion, and bringing all mankind down to the dust; when it lays hold on an impenitent sinner, and fills his flesh and soul with agonies; when it assaults a saint, and is conquered by faith; when it makes a wide ravage among our acquaintance, when it enters into our families, and takes away our near and dear relatives from the midst of us, still the christian may reap some divine advantage by it.

But can our own death be ever turned into a blessing too? Nature thinks it hard to learn such a strange lesson as this, and has much ado to be persuaded to believe it. How dismal are its attendants to flesh and blood! What languishings of the body! What painful agonies! What tremblings and convulsions in nature frequently attend the dying hour even of the best of christians! Can that be a blessing which turns this active and beautiful engine of the body into loathsome clay; which closes these eyes in long darkness, and deprives us of every sense? Can death become a blessing to us, which cuts us off from all converse with the sun and moon, and that rich variety of sensible objects which furnish out such delightful scenes all around us, and entertain the whole animal creation? Can that be a blessing which divides asunder those two intimate friends, the *flesh and the spirit*, that sends one of them to the noisome prison of the grave, and hurries away the other into unknown regions? Yes, the gospel of Christ has power and grace enough in it to take off all these gloomy appearances from death, and to illuminate the darkest side of it with various lustre. So the sun paints the fairest colours upon the blackest cloud, and while the thick dark shower is descending, it entertains our eyes with all the beauties of the rainbow; a most glorious type and seal of the covenant of grace, that can give a pleasing aspect to death itself, and spread light and pleasure over the darksome grave.

If we are believers in Christ, *death* is ours as well as *life*. These two contrary states may each of them derive peculiar benefits from the new covenant. The christian may be taught so to value and improve life, that he may be not only patient, but cheerful and thankful in the continuance of it. This has been made evident in a large discourse

already: And yet it must be confessed, that the advantages which death brings to a believer are still greater and more glorious, and this will appear in the following particulars:

I. Death finishes our state of labour and trial, and puts us in possession of the crown and the prize. St. Paul was appointed to die by the sword of Nero, and to end his labours and his race in blood; yet he rejoices to think that his race was just at an end, and triumphs in view of the glorious recompence; 2 *Tim.* iv. 7, 8. *I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.* There is a voice from heaven that proclaims the dead happy; upon this account, that their toil and fatigue is come to an end. *Rev.* xiv. 13. *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours, and their works follow them;* that is, the prize of everlasting happiness which Christ has promised to his labouring saints. *Rev.* ii. 10. *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.* So the weary traveller counts the last hour of the day the best; for it finishes the fatigue and toil of the day, and brings him to his resting-place. So the soldier rejoices in the last field of battle; he fights with the prize of glory in his eye, and ends the war with courage, pleasure, and victory.

II. Death frees us for ever from all our errors and mistakes, and brings us into a world of glorious knowledge and illumination. The vale of death is a dark passage indeed, but it leads into the regions of perfect light. *Now we know but in part,* says the apostle; 1 *Cor.* xiii. 12. *Now we see but through a glass darkly, then we shall see God and our Saviour face to face, and know them even as we are known;* not in the same degree of perfection indeed, but according to our measure and capacity, we shall know them, in a way of vision, or immediate sight, as God knows his creatures, as one man knows his friend, whose face he beholds with his eyes; or as one spirit knows another, by some unknown ways of perception which belong to spirits.

O what a new and unspeakable pleasure will it be to the disciples of Christ, and the ministers of the gospel, that have been tired and worn out in tedious controversies in this world, and sorely perplexed amongst the difficult passages of scripture, when they shall arrive at that region of light and glory, where the darknesses of the mind shall be all scattered, the veil shall be taken off from sacred things, and doubts and difficulties shall vanish for ever!

Alas! What desolation and mischief has the noise and clamour of controversy brought on the church of Christ in all ages! What quarrels and sharp contests has it raised among fellow-christians, and especially, where zeal and ignorance have joined together, and brought fire and darkness into the sanctuary! This has banished charity and love out of the house of God, and made the Spirit of God himself to depart grieved. Surely death carries a considerable blessing in it, as it delivers us from these disorders, these bitter quarrels, and appoints us a place in the temple of God on high, where the axe and the hammer never sound, where the saw of contention is never drawn, where the noise of war is heard no more, but perfect light lays a foundation for perfect and everlasting love.

III. Death makes an utter end of sin, it delivers us from a state of temptation, and conveys us into a state of perfect holiness, safety, and peace. *The spirits of the just are made perfect* in holiness, when they leave this sinful and mortal flesh, they stand without

spot or blemish, without fault or infirmity of greater or lesser size, and appear pure and undefiled before the throne of God; *Rev.* xiv. 5. *Their robes are washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb, and they serve him without sin, day and night, in his temple;* Rev. vii. 14, 15. When death carries them away from this world, it carries them out of the territories of the devil; for he has no power in that land whither happy souls go: And all the remaining lusts of the flesh, that had their death's wound given them by renewing grace, are now destroyed for ever; for the death of the body is the final death of sin, and the grave is, as it were, the burying-place of many unruly iniquities, that have too often defiled and disquieted the spirit.

And as the corrupt affections which are mingled with our flesh and blood, and which are rooted deep in animal nature, are left behind us in the bed of death, so when we ascend to heaven, we shall find no manner of temptation to revive them. There is no malice or angry resentment to be awakened there, no incitements to envy, intemperance, or the cursed sin of pride, that cleaves so close to our natures here on earth. When we are encompassed with those blessed creatures, angels and saints made perfect, we shall meet with no affront, no reproach, no injury, to provoke our anger, or kindle an uneasy passion. Most perfect friendship is ever practised there; it is a region of peace, a world of immortal amity.

Nor shall we find any temptation to envy, in that happy state; for though there are different ranks of glorified creatures, yet each is filled with a holy satisfaction, and hath an inward relish of his own felicity suited to his own capacity and state, and they have all a general relish of the common joy, and a mutual satisfaction in each other's happiness. Envy, that fretful passion, is no more. In heaven there are no provocations to those unruly appetites, which break in upon our temperance, and pollute our souls.

Pride and haughtiness of spirit have no room in that blessed world: The superior order of saints, which are nearest the throne, shall not despise the meanest; for the nearer they approach to the perfect image of Christ, the more intense and diffusive is their love. Besides, every saint in glory shall see himself in his own nothingness, and infinitely indebted to divine grace for all things: This shall for ever forbid all vanity and conceit of merit. In heaven we shall see God in the fulness of his glory, and shall have so penetrating a sense of his saving grace, that a creature rescued from hell cannot be proud there.

Rejoice then, ye poor feeble christians, that have been long wrestling with your indwelling sins, and maintaining a holy and daily fight, with strong and restless corruptions in your nature: *Lift up your heads* at the thoughts of death, *for the day of your redemption draws nigh;* Luke xxi. 28. Death is your deliverer. It is like the angel that Christ sent to Peter, to knock off his fetters, and release him from the prison; it may smite and surprize you, and it has indeed a dark and unlovely aspect; but its message is light and peace, holiness and salvation.

IV. Death is ours, for it takes us away from under all the threatenings of God in his word, and places us, in the actual possession of the greatest part of the blessings, that God has promised us. The saints that are dead are thus described; they are *those, who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises;* Heb. vi. 12.

Whilst we are in this life, there are many threatenings in the Bible, that belong to the saints as well as to sinners. I shall mention that great and general one that is annexed to the covenant of grace; *Psalm* lxxxix. 30. *If the children of Christ forsake my law, and*

walk not in my judgments; then will I visit their transgression with a rod, and their iniquity with stripes; but when death has conveyed them into the presence of their heavenly Father, they shall forsake his law no more, there are no more transgressions for the rod to correct, the stripes of chastisement cease for ever; and their Father, and their God, shall be angry no more.

The best part of the promises are fulfilled when a soul arrives at heaven. The promise of the resurrection of the body yet remains unaccomplished indeed; but every separate spirit in heaven waits for it with full assurance of accomplishment. "I have found," says the holy soul, "so many rich promises of the covenant fulfilled already, and I am in the possession of so many divine blessings that God once foretold, that I am well assured that my God is faithful who has promised, and the rest shall be all fulfilled."

V. Death raises us above the mean and trifling pleasures of the present state, as well as delivers us from all present pains, and brings us into a world of perfect ease, and superior and refined delight. It divides us from the pains and pleasures, that we derive from the first Adam, and sets us in the midst of superior blessings, which the second Adam has purchased for us. *We shall hunger no more, we shall thirst no more, neither shall the scorching heat of the sun light upon us,* or any painful influence from the elements of this world: *The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed us with celestial food,* suited to our purified natures, and lead us to drink full draughts of unknown pleasure, which is described by living fountains of water. We shall see God himself, the original beauty, and the spring of all delight: We shall see our Lord Jesus Christ, the most illustrious copy of the Father, *the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and God himself shall wipe away all tears from our eyes;* Rev. vii. 16, 17. *Though the wages of sin is death* by the appointment of the law of God; *Rom.* vi. 23. yet this very death is constrained to serve the purposes of our great Redeemer; and it brings us into the possession of that *eternal life,* which is the *gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

VI. Death not only gives us possession of promised blessings, but it banishes all our fears and doubts for ever, by fixing us in a state of happiness unchangeable. They that are once entered into the temple of God on high *shall no more go out* of it; *Rev.* iii. 12. For they are established in the house of God, they are as pillars there, they become a part of that vast and living temple, in which God dwells for ever in all his glory.

Death is ours; for it finishes our fears, it fulfils our wishes and our hopes, and leaves us no more room to fear to all eternity. When we behold the face of God in righteousness, and awake out of this world of dreams and shadows, in the world of happy spirits with the likeness of God upon us, we shall find sweet satisfaction; *Psalm* xvii. 15. *I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.* Death leaves a saint, as it were, but one thing to wish or hope for, and that is the resurrection, or the accomplishment of this text in its completest sense, *viz.* that their bodies may awake out of the grave with the likeness of Christ upon them, and be made conformable to his glorious body, in vigour, beauty, and immortality.

VII. Death is a happiness to a christian; for it divides him for ever from the company of sinners and enemies, and places him in the society of his best friends, his God, and his Saviour, his fellow-saints, and the innumerable company of angels. O how sorely has the soul of many a saint been vexed here on earth, as the soul of Lot was in

Sodom, with the conversation of the wicked! How have they often complained of the hidings of the face of God, of the absence of Christ their Lord, and the sensible withdrawings of the influences of the blessed Spirit!

There is a great partition-wall betwixt us and the happy world, whilst we are in this life; the veil of flesh and blood divides us from the world of spirits, and from the glorious inhabitants of it. With what surprizing joy, shall a poor, humble, watchful christian, that has been teased long, and long tormented with the company of the wicked, enter into that illustrious and blessed society, when death shall break down the partition-wall, and rend the veil of flesh and blood that divided him from them, and kept him at a painful distance! "It is better, infinitely better, shall the departed soul say, to see God without the medium of such ordinances, as I have used on earth: It is better to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord Jesus. It is better to ascend, and worship in the midst of the heavenly Jerusalem, and amongst that blessed assembly of the first-born, than to be joined to the purest churches on earth, or to be engaged in the noblest acts of worship, which the state of mortality admits of. Farewel sins and sinners for ever: Temptations and tempters, farewel to all eternity. And ye, my dear holy friends, beloved in the Lord, my pious relatives, my companions in faith and worship, farewel but for a short season, till you also shall be released from your present bondage and imprisonment by the messenger of death: Fear it not, for it is your Lord and my Lord, your Saviour and mine, who sends it to release you from all the evils which you have long groaned under, and to bring you to our Father's house, where the businesses, the pleasures, and the company are infinitely agreeable and entertaining."

Thus have I shewn in various instances, how the death of a believer in general is appointed to work for his good, and becomes an advantage to him through the grace of Christ. I proceed to shew how the death of a christian in all the particular circumstances that attend it, has something in it that may be turned to his benefit.

Christ has the keys of death and the grave; he was dead, and is alive, and behold he lives for evermore; Rev. i. 18. And he knows how to manage all the circumstances of the death of his saints for their profit: He appoints the time when, the manner how, and the place where they shall die, and determines all these things by rules of unsearchable wisdom, under the influence of his faithfulness and his love.

1. The time when we shall die is appointed by Christ: If he calls us away in the days of our youth, he secures us thereby from many a temptation, and many a sin; for our life on earth is subject to daily defilements. He prevents also many a sorrow and distress of mind, many an agony and sharp pain to which our flesh is subject, and saves us from all the languishing weaknesses of old age, and from tasting the dregs of mortality.

When our blessed Lord foresees some huge and heavy sorrows ready to fall upon us, or some mighty temptations approaching towards us, he lays his hand upon us in the midst of life, and hides us in the grave. This has been the sweet hiding-place of many a saint of God, from a day of public temptation and overspreading misery.

If he lengthens out our life to many years, we have a fair opportunity of doing much more service for our God, and our Redeemer; and we also enjoy the longer experience of his power, his wisdom, and his faithful mercy, in guiding us through many a dark difficulty, in supporting us under many a heavy burden, and delivering our souls from many a threatening temptation. Oftentimes he sweetens the passage of his aged saints

through the dark valley, with nearer and brighter views of the heavenly world: He gives them a strong and earnest expectation of glory, and some sweet foretastes of it, to bear them up under the languors of old age and sickness: The haven of rest becomes sweeter to them, when they have passed through many tedious storms: The hour of release into the world of light, is more exquisitely pleasing, after a tedious imprisonment in the flesh, and long years of darkness.

2. The manner how we shall die, is appointed also by Christ our Lord, for the benefit of his saints. If death smite us with a sudden and unexpected stroke, then we are surprized into the world of pleasure at once, and, ere we are aware, our souls find themselves in the midst of the paradise of God, surrounded with joys unspeakable. If our mortal nature decay by slow degrees, we have a precious opportunity for the more lively exercises of faith; we may then converse with death before-hand, and daily grow in preparation for our departure. We see ourselves launching down the stream of time, and if our faith be awake and sprightly, we rejoice in the sensible and hourly approaches of heaven and eternity. We may speak many useful dying sentences for the glory of our Lord, and make happy impressions upon the souls of those we leave behind: We may invite and require, we may allure and charge our dear relatives to follow us in the same path, and to meet us before the throne.

3. Our Lord also designs our benefit, when he appoints the place of our death, whether we shall quit the body at home or abroad; for some of us he sees it best, that our friends should stand round us and close our eyes, and, as it were, see our spirits take their flight into the invisible world, that they may assist and support us with divine words of consolation, or that they themselves may learn, and dare to die, and be animated by our example to encounter the last enemy. Our Lord sees it proper, for others of his saints, to die in the midst of strangers, or perhaps, amongst enemies, and by a violent death, that he may thereby give a glorious testimony to their faith and piety, as well as to the power of his own gospel. Whether we breathe our last at land or at sea, in our native country, or in a foreign climate, *all shall work together for the final welfare of those that love God, and are called* and justified, and sanctified *according to his holy purpose;* Rom. viii. 28.

There are, doubtless, some peculiar and secret reasons, in the grand comprehensive scheme of the counsels and decrees of God, why the death of every saint is appointed at this season, and not at another; why some young buds are cropped ere they blossom on earth, and transplanted to open and unfold themselves, and shine in the garden of God on high, while others are brought home into the heavenly garner, like fruit well-grown, or like a shock of corn fully ripe. There is a divine reason why some are hurried away by a violent death, and others are permitted naturally to dissolve into their dust: Why some must die on this spot of ground, and others on that; for the vast scheme of his counsels has a glorious consistency in it with the covenant of his grace: And indeed, the covenant of grace runs through the whole scheme of divine counsels, and mingles itself with them all. We rejoice in this meditation, while we believe the truth of it. We are persuaded, that we shall know, hereafter, the various and admirable designs of divine providence and love, in all the infinite variety of the deaths of his saints; and this shall make part of our songs in the upper world, and give a joyful accent to our hallelujahs there.

Let us maintain therefore, a blessed assurance of the wise and gracious designs of our

Lord, in all the circumstances of the death of his people. Let us learn to say with that aged saint, and eminent servant of Christ, the Reverend Mr. Baxter, when under many weaknesses of nature, and long and sore agonies of pain, he spake concerning his death, "Lord, when thou wilt, what thou wilt, how thou wilt." Let us insure our souls in his hands for eternity, and not be over-solicitous about the circumstances of our death, about the place, the manner, or the hour when we shall take our leave of life and time.

If this Sermon be too long, it may be divided here.

Having made it appear, in these several sermons, that death is ours, or shall turn to our advantage, not only when it strikes our friends or strangers, but when it seizes our own flesh also: I desire to conclude this subject of discourse with various inferences, of which some may be called doctrinal, and others practical.

The doctrinal inferences are these:

Inference I. How different is the judgment of sense, from the judgment of faith! The eye of sense looks upon death as a sovereign and cruel tyrant, reigning over all nature and nations, and making dreadful havoc among mankind, as it were, after his own will and pleasure; but faith beholds it as a slave subdued to the power of Christ, and constrained to act under his sovereign influence for the good of all his saints. Sense teaches us to look upon ourselves, as the possession and food of death; but faith assures us, that death is our possession, and a part of our treasure. Death is yours, O christians, for *all things are yours.*

When sense has the ascendant over us, we take death to be a dark and dismal hour; but in the speech and spirit of faith, we call it a bright and glorious one. Sense esteems it to be the sorest of all afflictions, but faith numbers it among the sweetest of our blessings, because it delivers us from a thousand sins and sorrows.

It has been reported, that Socrates called "death a birth-day into eternal life." A most glorious thought, and a very inviting name! But it is strange, that a heathen philosopher should ever hit upon it, it is so much like the dialect of the gospel, and the language of faith. He had learned to talk more nobly than the sensual world, though he was not favoured with the light of the gospel. It is so much the more shameful for christians, to talk and live below the character of this philosopher.

O when shall we get above this life of sense? When shall we rise in our ideas and our judgment of things? When shall we attain to the upper regions of christianity, and breathe in a purer air, and see all things in a brighter and better light? When shall we live the life of faith, and learn its divine language? Death is like a thick dark veil, as it appears to the eye of sense: When shall our faith remove the veil, and see the light, the immortality, the glory that lies beyond it? Death, like the river Jordan, seems to overflow its banks, when we approach it, and divides and affrights us from the heavenly Canaan: When shall we climb to the top of Pisgah, that we may look beyond the swelling waves of this Jordan, and take a fair and inviting prospect of the promised land?

II. How glorious and how dreadful is the difference, between the death of a saint and that of a sinner, a soul that is in Christ, and a soul that has no interest in him! The death of every sinner, has all that real evil and terror in it, in which it appears to an eye of sense; but a convinced sinner beholds it yet a thousand times more dreadful. When conscience is awakened upon the borders of the grave, it beholds death in its utmost horror, as the curse of the broken law, as the accomplishment of the threatenings

of an angry God. A guilty conscience looks on death with all its formidable attendants round it, and espies an endless train of sorrows coming after it. Such a wretch beholds death riding towards him on a pale horse, and hell following at his heels, without all relief or remedy, without a Saviour, and without hope.

But a true christian, when he reads the name of death among the curses of the law, knows that Christ his Saviour and his Surety, has sustained it in that dreadful sense, and put an end to its power and terror. He reads its name now in the promises of the gospel, and calls it a glorious blessing, a release from sin and sorrow, an entrance into everlasting joy. The saint may lie calm and peaceable in the midst of all the attendants of death; like Daniel in the den of lions, for it cannot hurt or destroy him: But when a sinner is thrown to this devourer, it does, as it were, break all his bones, it tears both his flesh and his spirit as its proper prey: *Death feeds upon him*, as the scripture expresses it; *Psalm* xlix. 14. and fills his conscience with immortal anguish. Who can bear the thought of dying in such a state under the dominion of death, without Christ, and without hope!

III. How much does the religion of the New Testament transcend all other religions, both that of the light of nature, and all the former revelations of grace; for it better instructs us how to die. The religion of the ancient patriarchs, the religion of Moses and the Jews, as well as the religion of the philosophers, all come vastly short of christianity, in the important business of dying.

The philosopher, by the labours of his reason, and by a certain hardiness of spirit, persuades himself not to tremble at the thoughts of death; for it may be, there is no hereafter: or if there be, he would fain hope for an happy one: And thus he ventures into death, with some sort of courage and composure of mind, like a bold man, that is taking an immense leap, in the dark, out of one world into another; but he can never know certainly, that there are no terrible things to meet him in that unseen state.

The religion of the Jews and patriarchs, which God himself revealed to men, enabled many of them to resign their lives with patience and hope, and to walk through the valley of death without much dismay, when the appointed hour was come. A few of them, I confess, have been elevated by a noble faith above the level of that dispensation: Yet some of them seem to make bitter mourning, because of the shadows of darkness that covered the grave, and all the regions beyond it. *They were all their life-time subject to bondage, through the fear of death;* Heb. ii. 14.

It is our Jesus alone, who has *brought life and immortality into so glorious a light by the gospel;* 2 Tim. i. 10. He dwelt long in heaven before he came into our world, and again he went as a fore-runner into those unseen worlds, and came back again and taught his disciples, what heaven is: And thus we learn to overcome death with all its terrors, by the richer prospect, which he has given us, of the heavenly country that lies beyond the grave: He has taught his followers to rejoice in dying, and to possess the pleasures that are to be derived from death, as it is an entrance into the regions of light and joy. Blessed be God! that we were born in the days of the Messiah, since Christ returned from the dead, and that we are not sent either to the schools of the philosophers, or even to Moses, to teach us how to die.

IV. Learn from these discourses, what a sweet and delightful glory belongs to the covenant of grace, that turns a curse into a blessing. When the broken law, or covenant, of works attempts to curse thee with death, O believer, (as Balaam did Israel) *the Lord*

thy God turns the curse into a blessing to thee by this new covenant, because the Lord thy God loveth thee; Deut. xxiii. 5. So afflictions are turned into mercies by the virtue of this covenant, they mortify our sins, they wean us from the world, they bring our hearts near to God, they make us partakers of his holiness. So death, which is the greatest affliction to nature, and has such a formidable aspect to a sensual man, is made subservient to the eternal welfare of a christian. It is this sweet covenant that has wrought the change; Christ has conquered it, and the believer enjoys the triumph.

Does the eye of nature behold death as a serpent? Our Lord Jesus has broken its teeth, and taken away its sting; for by his sacrifice he has abolished sin, which is the sting of death. Does nature look upon death as a lion? Our Redeemer has slain it, and the covenant of grace has furnished the carcase of it with honey, and stored it with delicious food for the entertainment of a christian; thus, *Out of the eater cometh forth meat, and out of the strong cometh forth sweetness;* Judges xiv. 14. The riddle of Samson, when applied in this manner, carries a diviner beauty in it, and more exquisite delight. And as that Jewish champion feasted his father and his mother, with delicacies taken out of the lion he had slain, so does our Lord feast his brethren and his friends, with sacred pleasures derived from death, our vanquished enemy.

O how unspeakable is the privilege of those that belong to Christ! If you are his, then death is yours: Christ is the only begotten Son, and he inherits all things; not only as a Son, but as the first overcomer: *Ye all are the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus;* Gal. iii. 26. *Ye shall also be overcomers, and shall inherit all things;* Rev. xxi. 7. *Whether life or death, things present or things to come, all are yours, for ye are Christ's.* I proceed to the practical uses.

I. If death, in every sense, may be turned to the advantage of the saints, as I have proved in the former discourse, let us see then, that, in all its appearances, we gain some advantage by it. Let us not act like fools, who have a prize put into their hands, and know not how to use it.

If our fellow-creatures die and go down to the dust, and the nations of mankind perish from the earth, let us learn thereby the frailty of our natures; let us learn so to *number our days, as to apply our hearts to wisdom;* Psalm xc. 12. and be awakened to an active and immediate preparation for the day of our own death. If we see impenitent sinners dying under the anguish of a guilty conscience, let us gain a sensible lesson of the dreadful evil of sin; let it raise such a religious fear of the wrath of God, and such a sacred gratitude for our deliverance, from the torments of hell, as may quicken every grace into its warmest exercise, and its brightest evidence. If death seize upon our Lord Christ himself, his dying groans lay a foundation for our immortal hopes: Let us meditate on the thousand blessings we receive from his cross and his tomb. Do the saints around us lie down and die? We should learn to follow them boldly into the dark valley, and to fall asleep in the dust with the same cheerful hopes of the joyful rising-day. Does death come near us into our own family, and tear our dear relatives from our arms? Even this may be turned to our advantage too: It should render the world and the pleasures of it more insipid and worthless: It should loosen our heart-strings from the fond embraces of the creature; for it calls our eyes and our souls heaven-ward and home-ward, and that with a loud and sensible voice, if nature and grace are awake to hear it.

If death and the grave be ours, and we make no use of this privilege, we are like

misers, who have treasure in their possession, but never employ it to any valuable purpose. Has Christ our Lord taken death among his captives, and made it his own property? Let us look upon ourselves as humble sharers in the victory; he has appointed it to serve the interest of all his followers: He has put it into the inventory of our treasures. Let us improve it then to these divine purposes, let us seize and enjoy the spoils *which Christ, the Captain of our Salvation*, has taken from the hands of the prince of darkness.

II. Is death become your possession, O believers, through the grace of the covenant? Fear it not then, but ever look upon it with an eye of faith as a conquered adversary: Behold it, as reduced to your service; wait for it, with holy courage and pleasure; it is a messenger of mercy to your souls from Christ, who hath vanquished it in the open field of battle, and reduced it to his subjection. When you labour and groan under sins and temptations, under pains and sorrows, remember Christ has appointed death to be his officer, for your relief. It is like the porter that opens the door of his repository, the grave, where your bodies shall take a sweet slumber till the resurrection-day; and it is appointed also to open the gates of heaven for your spirits, and to let them into a world of unknown felicity.

Death has so many things belonging to it, which are afflictive to nature, and formidable to the eye of sense, that we have need of all manner of assistance to raise our souls above the fear of it. The very thought of dying makes many a christian shudder, and sweat, and tremble, and awakens all the springs of human infirmity; O may the grace of faith gain a more glorious ascendency in our souls! We should often meditate on such doctrines as these, which place that dreadful thing death in the most easy and pleasing light; we should behold it as changed from a curse into a blessing, and numbered among our treasures. Christians should accustom themselves to look at it through the glass of the gospel, which casts fair colours upon what is in itself so dark and formidable. It is the gospel is that glass which discovers to us the flowery blessings that grow in that gloomy valley, and gives a fair and delightful prospect of those hills of paradise and pleasure that lie beyond the grave. Why should we let this blessed gospel lie neglected, and live still in bondage to the fear of dying?

The Recollection.—"Come now, and let us learn by this discourse, to shame ourselves out of these weaknesses, these unreasonable fears. Let us talk to our own souls in the language of faith. Why, O my soul, why art thou afraid to let this body die? Hast thou not endured labours and trials enough, and art thou unwilling to come to the end of them? Hast thou not yet been tempted enough? Hast thou not been foiled too often, and too often thrown down in the conflict? Think of thy many wounds of conscience, the bruises of thy spirit, the defilement of thy garments, and the loss of thy purity and thy peace. Canst thou bear, that all these should be repeated again and again? Art thou unwilling this war should have an end? Art thou afraid of victory and triumph? Wha dost thou labour and fight for? Dost thou not run to obtain the prize? Dost thou not wrestle and fight to gain the crown? And hast thou not courage enough to go across the dark valley, to take possession of this crown and this prize?

"Think, O my spirit, think of thy painful ignorance whilst thou dwellest in this region of shadows: Is not knowledge thy natural and delicious food? Hast thou not lived long enough in darkness, and been involved too long in mistakes and errors? And art thou willing to dwell in a land of darkness still, a land of dreams and disguises, where truth is

hardly found? Art thou afraid of the borders of that world, where light and knowledge grow, and where truth, and realities appear all unveiled, and without disguise? Where thou shalt be cheated no more with the sound of words, but shalt see all things just as they are, in a clear light, without error, and without confusion? O happy period of thy mistakes and wanderings, of all thy learned mazes in quest of truth! And art thou still afraid to come near it?

"Has it not been the matter of thy sacred mourning, that thy God is so much concealed from thee, that greatest and best of Beings? That the Son of God, *the brightness of the Father's glory;* Heb. i. 3. is so much a stranger, and thy Saviour is so little known? That thy faith has been labouring and wearied in many enquiries about the glories of his person as God-man, about the wonders of his united natures, and the mysteries of his gospel; about the power of his death, the virtue of his righteousness, and the sovereignty of his grace? And art thou afraid of the sunshine, and that perfect day that shall scatter all these clouds of doubt and mistake, and let thee see thy Saviour and thy God face to face, as they are seen by angels? O that surprising hour, of unknown delight, that shall place thee, O my soul, in the midst of the world of spirits, surrounded with the light of heaven, and in the open presence of God, even thy God! When thou shalt gain swift and transporting acquaintance with the Almighty Being that made thee, and the Son of God, who dwelt once in mortal flesh, and died to save thee! When the divine irradiations of the eternal Spirit shall unfold those mysteries to thy view, which had so much darkness about them in these lower regions! What an illustrious scene of light and joy shall arise all around thee, as thou enterest into that unknown state! What strange new ideas of things, what new worlds of knowledge shall throng in upon thee, and thy enlarged understanding shall receive them all with infinite satisfaction, and with ever-growing pleasure! Art thou not already on the wing, my soul, at such a divine prospect as this? O stupid creatures that we are! we seek after the light of truth here below, and croud about a little glimmering spark of knowledge, we wrangle all around it with endless contention, and yet when death would open the gate of glory, and admit us into regions of light, we start back, and retire, contented to abide among twilight and shadows.

"But, O my soul, if truth and knowledge are not sufficient to allure thee, has holiness no constraining power? Hast thou not sinned enough, and broken the laws of God often enough already? Hast thou not brought guilt enough, and grief enough, upon thyself, that thou art afraid of a state of perfect holiness? What is it that has given thee such inward pain as the perpetual workings of thy native iniquity? What is it that has made thee cry out, *O wretched creature that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Rom. vii. 24. From the temptations and the sins which are mingled with flesh and blood? And art thou afraid to have thy groans ended, thy complaints removed, and thy deliverance appear? Art thou unwilling to accept of the release? Dost thou shrink back from the sight of the deliverer? Has not thy faith often seen the spirits of the just made perfect standing before the throne, rejoicing before God, worshipping in the complete beauty of holiness? And has not this thy faith awakened thy desires and thy sacred wishes? O that I were in the midst of them! Why then art thou so unwilling to leave this body of sin and darkness, and to go out of this troublesome and impure prison into that glorious world, that blessed assembly, and to worship amongst them without imperfection, and without weariness? Consider, O my soul, are thy complaints

of indwelling corruption sincere? Are thy groans for deliverance honest and hearty? Why then art thou afraid to let this tabernacle be dissolved, and to gain a blessed release from these inbred and restless enemies? Has not the lustre of perfect holiness attraction and force enough in it, to awaken thy longings, and stretch thy wings for a flight to heaven?

" Remember also, whilst thou art here, and art often sinning, many of the threatenings of God in his word stand bent against thee, his arrows sometimes stick in thy flesh, and pierce thy very soul. I confess these are not the sword of his vindictive justice, thy afflictions are but the corrections of his rod: But is it not better to dwell in that world where thou shalt feel no such correcting strokes, and deserve chastisement no more, where the Lord thy God shall lay aside every frown, and remove his anger for ever?

" Thy best life now is to live upon the promises; but does not all the excellency of a promise consist in the hope of performance? And is not the performance then so much better than the promise itself? Is not possession better than hope? Is not an assured and an unchangeable possession better than this state of doubts and fears? Is it not much more agreeable to *dwell in the house of God for ever?* Psalm xxiii. 6. than only to make a visit to it now and then? Is it not infinitely better to be fixed in a state of perfect felicity, without the least fear or apprehension of losing it? To be as *a pillar in the temple of God, thy God, and to go no more out;* Rev. iii. 13.

" Think again, Hast thou not sustained sufficient pains and sorrows both of flesh and mind in this lower world? Death shall put an end to them all; and art thou unwilling to have a full release from sorrow and pain? Has this flesh of thine been complained of so often as thy clog and thy painful prison, and art thou afraid to have thy fetters knocked off? Has not thy body given thee smart and anguish enough? And has it not tempted thee enough away from thy God, and thy truest happiness? Has thy sinful sickly flesh been so charming a companion, that thou art not yet willing to part with it? Dost thou not desire to have all thy diseases healed at once? Wouldst thou not be glad to have all thy torments of body and mind for ever eased, and all the uneasinesses of flesh and spirit removed for ever?

" It is true, the mere desire of ease should not be the chief reason why thou shouldest desire death, nor shouldest thou seek it with an impatient spirit: It is thy duty to bear sufferings and sorrows with holy patience, as a good soldier of Christ; it is thy duty to abide in thy post during his pleasure, to fill up the hours with service, and to sustain the fatigues and burdens of the mortal state to the glory of God thy Saviour: But he does not require that thou shouldest fall in love with a state of guilt and pain, a state that has so much sin and temptation, so much burden and fatigue in it; he gives thee leave to groan after the hour of release and deliverance. *In this tabernacle we groan earnestly, being burdened;* 2 Cor. v. 2.

" Consider further, O my soul, what is there in this world that should make thee fond of continuing among the inhabitants of it? Has not the world, thou dwellest in, sufficiently discovered itself to thee, as a land of mere vanity and vexation, and art thou fond of the tents of Meshech and Kedar, where thy soul has so little peace? Art thou afraid to change thy dwelling-place? Hast thou not been teased long enough with the company of sinners, or the foolish and unfriendly carriage of those who are imperfect saints? Hast thou not been often ready to say, *O that I had the wings of a dove, to fly away from the windy storm and tempest!* Psalm lv. 6, 7. to get afar off from the rage and

malice of enemies, from the troublesome infirmities of friends, afar off from the peevishness, the envy, and the passion of some of thy fellow-christians? How often hast thou wished even for a wilderness where thou mayest be at rest! Behold the door of death will shortly open itself to thee, and would let thee in, not to a wilderness, but to a paradise, to a place of eternal rest and freedom from all uneasy society; and yet thou delayest and hangest backward, and art afraid to go.

"In that upper world the saints have no follies about them, no vicious and fretful humours, no springs of vexation; they leave all their weaknesses, their envy, and their anger behind them in the grave. In the heavenly country, every companion is an everlasting friend, and all thy dear and pious kindred, who are departed, have put off every thing that once made thee or them uneasy. They are far better company above than ever they were, or could be, here on earth; and dost thou not want to see them all in their best raiment of grace and glory; and to hold sweet communion with them in the purest intercourses of love?

"But there are still sweeter allurements to a holy soul; God, even thy God, dwells in the midst of his saints on high, and that in the full glories of his love: Jesus, thy Saviour, whom thou hast known, and whom thou hast loved, though thou hast never seen him; Jesus is Lord of that country, he waits for thee there: God himself dwells there as the fountain of felicity, and shall be no more absent from thee. Thou shalt no more complain of the withdrawings of the light of his countenance, or the short visits of his grace: Thou shalt sit solitary no more, nor mourn under the dark eclipses of the sun of righteousness. It is the pleasure of that heaven thou hopest for, *to be for ever with thy Lord, to behold his glory, to see him as he is, and to be made like him;* and wilt thou not enter in at the gate into the New Jerusalem when he calls thee, but tremble and start backward, because there is a short dark valley that lies on this side of it?

"Remember, O my soul, *death is thine:* There is nothing in that dark valley shall hurt thee. Lift up thy head, arise, and shake thyself out of the dust. Let thy faith take a sweet prospect over the little hills of time, and beyond the vale of death: Look far into the invisible world, and banish all thy fears under the strong allurement of the joys that are prepared for thee; wait with pleasure for the hour of thy departure, and rejoice and triumph when the divine message shall come. While thou continuest here, *life is thine.* When thou goest hence, *death is thine; things present and things to come are thine;* and the invisible world to which thou art hastening, has everlasting joys in reserve for thee: Heaven itself is thine: Heaven is the inheritance of all the saints: The glories laid up there are waiting for thy possession: The dissolution of thy earthly tabernacle shall convey thee into the midst of them.

"Awake, arise, and meet the happy moment, when thou shalt be undressed of this sinful flesh and blood: O let these defiled garments ever sit loose about thee, that they may be cast off without pain and regret: Go, my soul, at the summons of thy God and Father, and when the symptoms of dying nature shall say, *Hark, he calleth thee;* let thy faith and thy love, and thy joy answer, *Lord, I come.* Go, my soul, at the invitation of thy Redeemer, at the voice of thy beloved: Behold he appears, he comes! Go forth and meet him. Drop this fleshly clothing with holy delight; arise, *put on thy beautiful garments,* and shine, for the *glory of the Lord is rising upon thee:* Go shine among *the spirits of the just made perfect,* thyself a spirit released from earth, and divested of all imperfection. O happy farewel to life and time! O glorious entrance into immortality!"

HYMN FOR SERMON XLIII.

DEATH A BLESSING TO THE SAINTS.

I.

DO flesh and nature dread to die?
And timorous thoughts our minds enslave?
But grace can raise our hopes on high,
And quell the terrors of the grave.

II.

What! Shall we run to gain the crown,
Yet grieve to think the goal so near?
Afraid to have our labours done,
And finish this important war?

III.

Do we not dwell in clouds below,
And little know the God we love?
Why should we like this twilight so,
When 'tis all noon in worlds above?

IV.

There shall we see him face to face,
There shall we know the great unknown:
And Jesus, with his glorious grace,
Shines in full light amidst the throne.

V.

When we put off this fleshly load,
We're from a thousand mischiefs free,
For ever present with our God,
Where we have long'd and wish'd to be.

VI.

No more shall pride or passion rise,
Or envy fret, or malice roar,
Or sorrow mourn with downcast eyes,
And sin defile our souls no more.

VII.

'Tis best, 'tis infinitely best,
To go where tempters cannot come,
Where saints and angels ever blest,
Dwell and enjoy their heavenly home.

VIII.

O for a visit from my God,
To drive my fears of death away,
And help me thro' this darksome road,
To realms of everlasting day!

SERMON XLIV.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY, AND THE USE OF IT.

EPHESIANS ii. 18.

THROUGH HIM WE BOTH HAVE ACCESS BY ONE SPIRIT UNTO THE FATHER.

THERE is hardly another text in the Bible, of so short an extent, that contains in it so much of the substance and glory of our holy religion. Here we have,

I. The doctrine of the blessed Trinity plainly represented. The Father and the Holy Spirit are expressly named, and the little word, "him," most evidently refers to Christ the Son of God, who is mentioned before, *verse* 13.

II. We read also in this verse, the important use of this great doctrine: We must have access to God the Father, through the mediation of his Son, by the aids of the Holy Spirit: And,

III. There is the union of all nations, and the harmony of all the true worshippers of God held forth in the words, *We both have access.* This is the common and universal method of approach to God, for it is provided for the whole world, which is here distinguished into Jews and gentiles. *We both have access to the Father by one Spirit, through one Lord Jesus.*

These three shall be the chief divisions of my discourse, and I shall consider each of them distinctly.

First. The doctrine of the blessed Trinity is here represented to us, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: And in order to set this article of our faith in the most plain and easy light, for the use of common christians, I would draw it out, as far as scripture evidently leads the way, into several propositions. But here let it be observed, that I am not going to present you with any of those particular schemes of explication of this doctrine, which have divided the Trinitarian writers, but nakedly to represent it according to its most obvious appearances in scripture, and yet in such a manner as almost all our divines have received and delivered it, who may differ in particular schemes of explication.

Proposition I. God is a Spirit, all-wise and almighty, infinite, eternal, unchangeable, and incomprehensible by any creature; the first, the greatest, and the best of Beings.

Since the word of God assures us that *he is a Spirit;* John iv. 24. since men are called his offspring; *Acts* xvii. 28. since man is *the image of God;* 1 Cor. xi. 7. it is evident, that God teaches us to conceive of himself, in a way of resemblance to our own souls, which are spirits. We are therefore to conceive of him as a Being, which has understanding, or consciousness and knowledge, which has a free will, and power of operation; for these are the clearest and best notions that we have of a spirit: And the scripture itself frequently applies them all to God, and speaks of his understanding, will, and power.

Yet still let us remember, that we must conceive of these things in God, in the highest and greatest perfection possible; removing always, from our idea of God, every thing that is imperfect, and raising this idea infinitely above every power and quality that is in our own souls. He hath infinite wisdom, or understanding, to know, contrive, and decree all his works, and infinite power, to execute and effect his decrees. Every thing in God transcends the highest conceptions of man.

II. There is but one only, the living, and the true God. There is but one godhead, one divinity; for since God is the first, the greatest, and the best of Beings, there can be but one that is the very first, the very greatest, and the very best.

Besides, God is a self-sufficient Being, and can want nothing from another; *Acts* xvii. 25. He is an all-sufficient Being, and can do every thing of himself; *Job* xlii. 2. and therefore, he cannot possibly stand in need of any other Being beside himself. Within himself the one God possesses all possible perfection. Two such all-sufficient Beings could do no more than one could do, either with regard to their own blessedness, or with regard to creatures; for if two could make each other more blessed, or do any thing more toward creatures, than one could do, then each of them alone could not be self-sufficient, nor all-sufficient; each of them could not be a God, if they could want any help from another. Thence it follows, that there cannot be two Gods; for since each of them must be self-sufficient, that is, sufficient for himself, and all-sufficient, that is, sufficient for all other purposes whatsoever, one of these two Gods would be utterly needless and useless: But it is absurd to imagine, that a God is an useless or needless Being; therefore there can be no other God but one.

This is the great and universal dictate of the light of nature, and this is the constant doctrine of scripture in the Old and New Testament: And indeed, this unity of the godhead is a peculiar glory of all the religions that God hath given to men, and whereby they are distinguished from the false religions of the heathen nations, who did generally profess more gods than one. God hath always taken care to secure to himself an unrivalled dignity and majesty, in all his dispensations. This is the language of God by Moses, *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord;* Deut. vi. 4. And Christ confirms this doctrine, most abundantly, in the New Testament, and that in the very same words; *Mark* xii. 29. And he commends the scribe for affirming, there is one God, and there is none other but he. This is the foundation and basis of all that can be called true religion, in every nation and in every age since the world began. And when a multitude of nations had lost this doctrine of the one God, and fell into the worship of many, whom they called gods, it was one great design of christianity, to destroy polytheism, or the doctrine of many gods, among the nations of the world, and to reduce them more universally to that ancient and eternal truth which some of their own philosophers professed, *viz.* that there is but one true God.

Hence it follows, by plain consequence, from these two propositions, that since God is a Spirit, eternal, allwise, and almighty, &c. and since there cannot be more Gods than one, there cannot be more than one eternal, allwise, and almighty Spirit; there can be but one eternal and almighty Being. Let this then be fixed as an unchangeable truth.

III. This one God hath revealed himself by the light of nature, as well as by scripture, to be the First Cause of all things in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, the Creator and Governor, the original Possessor, and the sovereign Lord of all other beings whatsoever. And as he is the original Lord of all, he requires the worship and homage

of all his intelligent creatures: He demands holy obedience to his laws, and humble submission to his providences; and upon this account, even some of the ancients, by the light of nature, have called him, *Father of all.*

IV. The great God hath more clearly made himself known in his word, under the personal and relative character of a Father, that is, as a person bearing the relation of a Father, and that not only to angels and men, who are called the sons of God; but he is a Father also to our Lord Jesus Christ himself, though in a far more excellent and superior way, for Christ is *the only begotten Son.* Yet it may be noted, that God is never called the Father of the Holy Ghost.

Under this personal character of the Father, the great God appears, in scripture, as the prime Agent and Ruler in all the kingdoms of nature, and grace, and glory: The Father is eminently Lord of heaven and earth, as Christ himself calls him.* He sustains the dignity and majesty of godhead, and maintains the divine rights and prerogatives of it, in heaven, earth, and hell. It is under this personal character that he appears, in my text, as that God and Father, who receives the homage and worship of sinful men, returning and approaching to him through Jesus Christ his Son, and by his Holy Spirit.

V. God the Father is revealed in scripture, as transacting his affairs that relate to his creatures through Jesus Christ his Son, and by his Holy Spirit. It is by his Son *he made the worlds;* Heb. i. 2. It is by his Spirit he *formed the host of heaven;* Psalm xxxiii. 6. It is by his Spirit he *renews the face of the earth, and covers it with living creatures;* Psalm civ. 30. It is by his Son he redeems sinful mankind from hell, and by his Spirit he sanctifies them, and makes them fit for heaven. Note, The Son of God is sometimes called *the Word of God,* and God is said to act by his word, as well as by his Son, in several places of scripture†.

These are the blessed Three, who by the christian church, for many ages, have been called the holy Trinity. The clear and distinct revelation of them, and their various offices to us in the gospel, is the chief glory of the christian religion, and therefore we are initiated or admitted into the profession of this religion, by being baptized into the name of the sacred Three, *the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.*

Having surveyed the scriptural representations of God the Father, in the foregoing propositions, let us now consider what is the first, the most plain and obvious manner, wherein the scripture represents to us the Son of God, and the Spirit of God, and, by degrees, rise up to the several and more complete descriptions of them in the Bible.

VI. The Son of God is spoken of generally, in the New Testament, as a very glorious Person, an immortal spiritual Being who was some way begotten of the Father, that is, derived from God the Father, or hath some special relation to him, as an *only begotten Son;* John i. 18. as the *first begotten of God;* Heb. i. 6. as *the first-born of every creature;* Col. i. 15. who was with God, and *had glory with the Father before the world was;* John i. 1. xvii. 5. *By whom God made the worlds, and created all things,*

* Matt. xi. 25. *Jesus said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth;* verse 27. *All things are delivered to me of my Father.*

† I do not here assert any thing, or make any enquiries, whether, or how far the idea of the Word of God, may differ from the idea of the Son of God, because this has been controverted among orthodox writers. It is very plain and certain, that both these names belong to Jesus Christ, the second Person in the sacred Trinity; and this is sufficient for my present purpose, since I design to avoid all particular controversies about modes of explication in this place.

visible and invisible; Col. i. 16. Heb. i. 2, 3. *Who came forth from the Father, and came into this world;* John xvi. 28. who took flesh and blood upon him seventeen hundred years ago; *Heb.* ii. 14. and thus became a complete man: He was *made of a woman;* Gal. iv. 4. *was born of the virgin Mary,* in an extraordinary manner, without an earthly father; *Luke* i. 35. and was for this reason also called the Son of God. He lived above thirty years a man among men, taught divine doctrine here on earth, and wrought various divine wonders, to confirm it, was crucified by the Jews and Romans, rose again from the dead, *left this world, and ascended to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God;* John xx. 17. even where he was before he appeared in flesh; *John* vi. 62.

VII. As this description raises Jesus Christ far above the dignity of angels, and carries something divine in it, so there are several express ascriptions of true and proper divinity or godhead to him. This glorious person Jesus, the Son of God, hath divine names, titles, attributes, operations, and worship ascribed to him, even such whereby God the Father himself is known and distinguished to be the true God, &c.

Is the Father called the Lord our God often in scripture? So Thomas calls Christ, *My Lord and my God;* John xx. 28. Is the Father called, "the First and the Last;" *Isaiah* xliv. 6. So is the Son; *Rev.* i. 17. and xxi. 13. Is the Father called Jehovah, *the mighty God,* and *God blessed for ever?* So is Christ; *Jer.* xxiii. 6. *Isaiah* ix. 6. *Rom.* ix. 5. Christ is that Jehovah, whom all *the angels of God must worship;* Psal. xcvii. 17. compared with *Heb.* i. 6. Christ is that God, that Jehovah, who *laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of his hands;* Heb. i. 10, 12. compared with *Psalm* cii. 22, 25. He is that Lord and God, who *ascended on high, and led captivity captive;* Psalm lxviii. 18. compared with *Eph.* iv. 8. He is that Jehovah, on whose *name, those who call, shall be delivered, or saved;* Joel ii. 32. compared with *Rom.* x. 13.

These, and many other scriptures prove, that Jesus Christ may be properly called true God: *For our God is a jealous God,* jealous of his honour and divine prerogatives; *Exod.* xxxiv. 17. Jehovah is his name, and *he will not give his* name and *glory,* his peculiar titles and attributes, *to another;* Isaiah xlii. 8. Therefore since Christ the Son of God, has these divine names, titles, and glories attributed to him, he must have true godhead, in some way or manner, belonging to him also.

VIII. Since Jesus Christ, considered as man, cannot have these divine names and titles belonging to him; therefore the man Jesus must be united to God, or one with God, to have a right to these names, &c. Thus the Son of God plainly appears to be a complex person, who has two distinct natures united in him, namely, *God and man:* And under this character he is several times represented in scripture, in the Old and New Testament. He is the *child, who is born,* and yet *the mighty God;* Isaiah ix. 6. He is *the righteous branch of David, whose name is Jehovah our righteousness, &c.* Jer. xxiii. 5, 6. He is *Emmanuel, or God with us;* Matt. i. 23. He is the *Word, who was with God, who was God, and was made flesh;* John i. 1, 14. He is God, even the living God, *manifest in the flesh,* who was taken up in glory; 1 *Tim.* iii. 15, 16. He is a man, *in whom dwells all the fulness of the godhead bodily;* Col. ii. 9. *A man of the seed of David,* and yet *God over all, blessed for ever;* Rom. ix. 5.

True God and true man are united in this wonderous Person, as one complex principle of doing and suffering, even as the body and the soul are united in every man to make

one complex agent. And thereby Christ is divinely fitted for those blessed offices which he sustains, the work which he performs, and the worship which he receives. *God redeemed his church with his own blood;* Acts xx. 28. *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive glory and blessing;* Rev. v. 12. This is the most plain and clear account, which the scripture gives us of Christ the Son of God. Now let us enquire what is the most easy and obvious notion of the blessed Spirit in scripture.

IX. The Spirit of God seems to be most usually represented, in the Old Testament and in the New, as a distinct, eternal, essential principle in the godhead,* even as the spirit of a man is a natural, essential principle in man. This is the comparison used in scripture; 1 *Cor.* ii. 11. *As none knows the things of a man, save the spirit of a man, which is in him; even so the things of God, knoweth none but the Spirit of God.* A number of other texts seem to conspire in this representation; *Psalm* cxxxix. 7. *Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, whither shall I flee from thy presence;* where the term Spirit signifies God himself, or a distinct principle in the Divine Essence. *Psalm* cvi. 33. *The children of Israel provoked his Spirit:* Isaiah. lxi. 10. *They rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit,* even as the spirit of a prince is provoked and vexed by the rebellion of his subjects. So *Eph.* iv. 30. *Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed. These have quieted my Spirit in the north country,* &c. Zech. vi. 8.

As the spirit of a man, or of any living creature, does not imply another being, derived from that creature, but a natural principle of operation in the very essence of that creature, and whereby that creature acts, so the Holy Spirit is generally called the Spirit of God, not to denote another inferior being derived from God, but some eternal glorious principle in the very essence of God, some principle or power in and of the true and eternal godhead, by which God operates.† So Psalm xxxiii. 6. *The hosts of heaven are formed by the breath, or Spirit, of God.* Job xxvi. 13. *By his Spirit he garnished the heavens.* Psalm li. 12. David prays, that God would *uphold him by his free Spirit;* Rom. viii. 11. *God shall quicken your mortal bodies,* that is, raise you from the dead, *by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.* Thus God createth the world, and raiseth the dead by his Spirit, as an almighty principle of operation.‡

* The pious and venerable Doctor Owen, in his "Discourse of the Holy Spirit," in his little book of the Trinity, makes no scruple to use the term, "a distinct principle of operation," and represents it, "as subsisting in one godhead, in the divine essence or being;" and this he does in several places of that discourse.

† Note, I have, in some of my writings, used the word "power," to denote this principle of operation in the godhead, since this word is very much used in scripture to describe the Holy Spirit. *Luke* i. 35. *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee.* Acts x. 38. *Jesus of Nazareth was anointed with the Holy Spirit, and with power.* John iii. 34. *He had the Spirit given him without measure;* and it was by this Spirit he wrought miracles, and cast out devils, and healed diseases, which, in other places, is called the finger of God, and the power of God; *Matt.* xii. 28. *Luke* xi. 20. and v. 17. The apostles waited at Jerusalem for the promise of the Spirit, which, *Luke* xxiv. 49. is called their *being endued with power from on high:* the word is δυνάμις, power, not ἐξουσία, or authority: And many other scriptures might be cited for this purpose.

Let it be noted also, that the word "power" does not lead us into the idea of another distinct substance, in the godhead, as the word "principle" might chance to do.

‡ It might be added, perhaps under this proposition, that, when the Spirit of God is represented as speaking or acting in believers, he seems to be described as the Spirit of the Father, or a divine almighty principle really belonging to God, which operates in them, but is entirely distinct and different from their own spirits; so Matt. x. 20. *It is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.* It is this same Spirit of God, which taught their tongues to speak strange languages, and wrought miracles by their lips and their hands. It is manifested as a divine principle of agency speaking and acting in them, infinitely different from all their human principles of acting: This appeared eminently in the primitive and inspired christians, and in the ancient prophets; they were acted as by another spirit, or a divine active principle, distinct from, and vastly superior to their own.

X. This Divine Principle, the Spirit of God, is sometimes represented in a personal manner as a divine person, or sovereign intelligent Agent, even as the true eternal God himself, with divine names, titles, attributes, &c. So the spirit of a man, though it be but one distinct principle in man, yet is sometimes represented as the man himself: And this is very common in the Hebrew idiom, and sometimes in other languages. There are several instances of this representation of the Spirit of God in scripture. Is God the Father the God of Israel, and is not the Holy Spirit so too? 2 *Sam.* xxiii. 2, 3. *The Spirit of Jehovah spake by me, the God of Israel said.* The Holy Ghost is that Jehovah who was *tempted by the Jews in the wilderness:* Compare *Psalm* xcv. 3. with *Heb.* iii. 7—9 He is that God that *dwells in the saints as in his temple;* 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. and vi. 19. He is that God to whom *Ananias told a lie;* Acts v. 3, 4. *Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.* He is that divine Person, who said, *Separate to me Paul and Barnabas for the work whereunto I have called them;* Acts xiii. 2. He is that divine Agent, who sent Peter to Cornelius; *Acts* x. 20. *The Spirit said to him, behold two men seek thee, go with them, for I have sent them.**

Here note, That there are some places of scripture, wherein it is pretty difficult to determine, whether the Holy Spirit be represented as the sovereign divine Agent, that is, God himself; or, as a distinct power, or principle in the godhead, by which God the Father acts. And, upon this account, some texts may be fairly interpreted both ways, without any inconvenience: Yet, in other places, this distinction is plainly observed, as may appear by several of these scriptures which I have cited.

XI. Sometimes this Divine Principle, the Holy Spirit, is represented in a personal manner, but in a subordinate character, and as a person more directly acting according to the economy of the gospel. Then he is set forth, not only as proceeding † from the Father, and given to the Son, but he is described also as sent both by the Father and the Son, to perform various offices and operations in the world, and especially in the church. John xv. 26. *When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.* And though under this idea in the christian economy, the Spirit is represented in a subordinate manner, yet in his divine nature or godhead, he is truly, essentially, and eternally one with God the Father.

If this proposition does not give full satisfaction, concerning the representation of the Holy Spirit, in a subordinate manner, in some scriptures, perhaps, the next proposition may relieve those difficulties.

XII. The term Spirit, and Holy Spirit, in scripture, does not always signify the divine Agent himself, but sometimes it means his gifts, graces, and influences, the virtue or efficacy of this divine principle in godhead. Nor is this at all strange, for Jesus Christ himself is called the Word of God, because he reveals the will of God to men; and yet the very laws and revelations, which God hath given to men by Jesus Christ,

* Here I take occasion to correct a mistake of my memory, in my last "Dissertations on the Trinity," where I did not remember, that the pronoun I, was applied to the Holy Spirit, in the New Testament.

† I do not here enter into that question, whether the Holy Spirit, considered in his own divine essence, or subsistence, is derived from the Father, or from the Son, or both? But I content myself here to declare, that, as to the economy of the gospel, and the manner of operation, the Spirit proceeds from the Father, and is sent both by the Father and the Son. This is plain scripture, and beyond all dispute.

are sometimes also called the Word of God; so, though the Spirit of God himself distributes gifts, and graces, and divine influences among men, yet these very gifts and graces, and divine influences, which are given by the Spirit, are also sometimes called the Holy Spirit. This has been always granted by our best writers.

And perhaps, this may be the meaning of that term, in some of those places of scripture, where the Spirit is said to be poured out upon men, to be shed down on the apostles, to be given to believers by laying on the hands of the apostles, where men are said to have a portion of the Spirit, whether greater, or less, or double; or perhaps, where the Spirit is said to be, or not to be, given by measure, or where persons are said to be filled, or anointed with the Spirit. Perhaps, I say, some of these scriptural phrases may be better explained concerning the gifts, graces, and influences of the Holy Spirit, than concerning the divine Agent himself, who is true God. It seems to be much more proper to say, divine influences are shed down, poured out, and given to men, by laying on of hands, &c. than to say, that the true God himself is shed down, is poured out, or is given, to some men, by other men's laying hands upon them; or than to say, we are anointed with God, or God is given, or not given, by measure, &c.*

This has been the general sense of all our divines in this matter, and I thought it necessary to insert this proposition here, that it might more evidently appear, that though, in some scriptures, the term Spirit, and Holy Spirit, may signify his gifts, graces, and influences, yet this does not at all derogate from the true and eternal godhead, which is plainly ascribed to the Holy Spirit in other places. Here note, though it is hard to determine always with certainty, when the Holy Ghost, or Spirit of God, signifies the divine Agent himself, and when it denotes his influences; yet there are some texts, wherein the sense is plain and evident.

XIII. Though the Son, and Spirit, are true God, as well as the Father; yet all our divines universally acknowledge, that the language of scripture seems to ascribe some sort of peculiar eminence, or special prerogative, to the Father, in such respects as these.

1. The Father, as I hinted before, is always represented as the first and chief Agent in creation, in providence, and in the affairs of salvation; the Father is described and exhibited as acting by his Son, or Word, and by his Spirit, as sending them, and employing, or using them, as mediums of his agency: Whereas the Son, and Spirit, are never represented as chief Agents, in comparison with the Father; nor are they said, in this manner, to act by the Father, or to send, or use, and employ him as such a medium of their acting.

2. When the name of God is used absolutely in scripture, it generally relates to the

* There are several other scriptures that confirm this proposition. It is evident, that it was the Holy Spirit by which Elijah spoke and acted, and yet it is called the spirit of Elijah, that is, his gifts; 2 *Kings* ii. 9, 15. It is the Holy Spirit by which the Corinthians spake, yet it is called the spirits of the prophets, and these are said to be subject to the prophets; 1 *Cor.* xiv. 32. which would hardly be said concerning the divine Agent, or God himself. See Pool's Annotations.

This proposition does by no means deny, or diminish the truth and glory of the Spirit of God dwelling eminently in the human nature of Christ, who was anointed and filled with the Spirit, and subordinately in every true christian: For God himself is said to dwell in his people, as in his temple, and the *Spirit of God dwells in them, and abides with them for ever;* John xiv. 16, 17. For *he that hath not the Spirit of Christ, is none of his;* Rom. viii. 9. But this proposition relieves those harsh and unwarrantable expressions, of being anointed with God, of receiving a double portion of God, of God being shed, or poured down on men, which would be the plain consequence of interpreting such scriptures concerning the divine Agent himself, or the Holy Spirit who is true God; and for that reason our divines have generally thought it proper and necessary to interpret many of these expressions, rather concerning the gifts, graces, and influences of the Spirit.

Father. This appears in innumerable instances: As, for example, where Christ is called the Son of God, the word God plainly signifies the Father: And indeed, this idea of God, as the Father, or prime Agent, is much the most frequent and general sense of the word God, in the Old and New Testament, as all men confess.

3. The Father is described as the only true God, as the one God, even the Father; and that in such scriptures, where the Son, or Spirit, are named, and plainly distinguished from him. *John* xvii. 3. Christ saith to his Father; *This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. Eph.* iv. 6. "There is one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one God and Father of all." 1 Cor. viii. 6. *To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things.*

XIV. Since there is but one God, even the Father, according to St. Paul, and since the Father is the only true God, according to Christ's own expression, then the Son and Spirit cannot have another, or a different godhead from that of the Father: But since the Son and Spirit, also, are true God, it must be by some communion in the same true godhead, which belongs to the Father: For if it were another godhead, that would make another God; and thus the christian religion would have two or three Gods, which is contrary to the whole tenor of the gospel.*

This might be proved from many scriptures, and many reasonings drawn from scripture: I shall mention two or three of them.

1. Christ himself saith; *John* x. 30. *I and my Father are one*, that is, one in divine power and godhead, as the context leads us to expound it: And this has been the most general sense of all our Trinitarian writers. 1 *John* v. 7. The apostle saith, *There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, and these three are one;* which is usually explained, these three are one in Deity, or have one and the same godhead. Nor do I know any better exposition.

2. The godhead of the Father, and the godhead of the Spirit, is the very same godhead which is in Christ, and which wrought his miracles. John xiv. 10. *I am in the Father, and the Father is in me: It is the Father that dwelleth in me, he doth the works*, that is, the godhead of the Father. And this language is so strong, as if Christ and God, in these miraculous actions, were to be esteemed one complex Agent, since he elsewhere says, John x. 30. *I and my Father are one.* Again, Matt. xii. 28. *Jesus, by the Spirit of God cast out devils.* Now if there were any other distinct godhead in the Son, besides the godhead of the Father, or of the Spirit, it seems to be somewhat strange and unaccountable, that the miracles of Christ should never be, plainly, ascribed to that peculiar distinct godhead of the Son, but that scripture should so often tell us,

* Here, let it be observed, that I do not enter into that question, whether the godhead, which is ascribed to the Son, does always signify the full, complete, and adequate idea of the godhead, which is in the Father; or whether, in some scriptures, it may mean only an inadequate idea of godhead, which may be supposed to be called the word, or wisdom of God; or whether it be not rather the entire godhead under the special idea of wisdom: For I would not enter into any particular schemes of explication, in this sermon: But, in general, it is evident from scripture, that the godhead of Christ, and that of the Father, must be one and the same godhead, since there are not two Deities.

Let it be observed, again; that, supposing the godhead of the Father and the Son, to be the very same, then, though the Father has the only true godhead in him, the Son and Spirit are not excluded from a communion therein. For thus it may be made to appear, that, though the Father be called *the only true God;* John xvii. 3. the Son and Spirit may be true God also; yet, perhaps, this text might receive a much clearer explication, by applying some particular scheme, in order to interpret it; but this is not my present work.

he wrought his miracles by the Holy Spirit, or by the aid of his Father. I think, therefore, it must at least imply thus much, that the godhead of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, is but one and the same godhead. And it is this same one godhead, or divine essence, that is united personally to the man Jesus Christ, and wrought his miracles: It is the same godhead that subsists in the Father, and in the Son, whatsoever personal distinctions are between them, which shall be considered immediately.

3. Many of those scriptures, in the Old Testament, which apparently refer to God the Father, that is, to the great God, considered and exhibited as the prime Creator, and Lord of all, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; I say, many of these very scriptures are ascribed to Christ, in the New Testament, and interpreted concerning Christ; particularly in *Rom.* x. 11—13. xiv. 10—12. *Eph.* iv. 8—10. *Phil.* ii. 6—11. *Heb.* i. 10—12. which, I think, could not be a just interpretation, if the godhead of Christ, and the godhead of the Father, were not one and the same godhead. I add after all, this hath been the common and general sense of all our protestant divines, at home and abroad, that the godhead of the Father, Son, and Spirit, is but one and the same godhead, or divine essence.

XV. Yet, there is a plain distinction held forth in scripture, between the sacred Three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as I have already declared; even so plain and strong, as that they are all several times represented, in a personal manner, and are spoken of, as three distinct Persons,* who have different works or offices, attributed and assigned to them.

The Father is represented, as the prime Agent, in our creation, and redemption, our sanctification, and salvation: It was he sent his Son Jesus Christ to redeem, and save us from hell: It is he sends his Holy Spirit to enlighten, sanctify, and comfort us, and to prepare us for heaven.

The Son is represented as sent by the Father into this world, to take our flesh and blood upon him, that he might die to redeem us: He becomes our Prophet, our Priest, and our King, to complete our salvation: He sends the Holy Spirit, from the Father, to dwell in his people.

The Holy Spirit is represented as sent, by the Father and the Son, to confirm the truth of the gospel, to guide us into all truth, to change our sinful natures into holiness, and to witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God: He is expressly called a Witnesser, and a Comforter, or Advocate.

XVI. Upon the whole it appears, that there is, and there must be, some real union and communion in godhead between the sacred Three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, to answer and support the divine names, titles, and attributes, &c. which are ascribed to them all: And, there is, and there must be, some sufficient distinction between them, to sustain these distinct personal characters and offices, and to answer to these distinct representations of scripture: Though how far this oneness of godhead, and this personal distinction extend, may not be easy for us, to find out exactly, and to describe to the understanding and satisfaction of our fellow-christians.

* Though they are generally called "three distinct Persons," by our divines, yet there are no writers, either abroad or at home, that ever pretended this to be the express language of scripture: And there are very few, if any, of our most orthodox writers, who ever supposed the word "person," was to be taken here in the full, common, and literal sense of it, for a distinct conscious being; but only in a qualified and restrained sense, or a sense that is analogous, or a-kin to the common meaning of it, among men: For three distinct persons, in the common and literal sense of it, would be three distinct Spirits, which very few Trinitarians allow.

This is that very question, which has so much difficulty in it to answer: This has been the hard problem of christianity, in almost all ages, how to reconcile and adjust this article: This has been the solemn labour of our several schemes and hypotheses, wherein some of us would be glad to arrive at clearer conceptions, by a further search of the holy scriptures. But among the many attempts that have been made to adjust this matter, there is not one which is universally approved.

XVII. Though perhaps, we may not find, nor determine clearly and precisely, how far the sacred Three are the same as to their oneness of godhead, nor how far they are different, as to their distinct personal characters; yet it is our duty to honour them, according to the revelation which scripture hath made; that is, we must pay all of them divine honours, since they have communion in godhead; and we must transact our important affairs of salvation with them, according to their distinct offices, as our Father, our Saviour, and our Sanctifier.

Thus I have given a plain scriptural account of the doctrine of the Trinity, without entering into those particular explications, whereby Trinitarian writers have unhappily divided themselves into several contending parties. And I have done my endeavour to express what appears to be the first, the most plain, and obvious representation of things in scripture, and that so inoffensively to my brethren, who own and believe this doctrine, that I am persuaded there have been but few Trinitarians these hundred years past, who would deny any one of all these propositions. Nor am I conscious to myself that I have ever written any thing inconsistent with them, in any of my discourses on this divine subject.

Here is a proper division of this Sermon into two parts.

The second thing contained in the text, is, the important use of this great doctrine of the Trinity, and that is, We have an access to the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit.

I shall not stand here to debate, whether the access, which we have to the Father, in my text, refers to any particular act of worship, or to our general return to God from a state of sin, guilt, and distance. The text is a divine truth in both these senses: But since it seems to be the chief design of the whole chapter, to shew the way of our return to the favour of God, and a state of peace and friendship with him, since we are said to be *brought near to God by the blood of Christ;* verse 13. I suppose, it cannot be improper to take this verse, in the same extensive sense.* But, if the apostle should mean our access to God, in particular acts of worship, here, in my text, yet, I am sure, this glorious sentence is justly applicable to the general access of a sinner to God, and his introduction into a state of divine favour: For it must be confessed, that our first general return to God from a state of sin, and all our gradual advances to greater nearness, must be still expected, and obtained through Christ, and by the Holy Spirit.

Here let us consider the different stations, or characters, in which the sacred Three are represented in this great and important concern of our salvation, and at the end of each representation, I shall shew briefly what our duties are to the sacred Three, in our approaches to God, correspondent to the stations in which the gospel places them.

* I might take notice here, in order to confirm my extensive sense of the text, that the word access, in one or more copies, is εἰρήνην, peace: And the inference, which the apostle makes in the next verse, *Therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners,* is very naturally drawn from our access to God, as a state of peace with God, but not from a particular act of worship.

I. God, the great God, and Father of all, is here represented as sustaining the majesty of godhead, as the sovereign Lord, and Governor of his creatures, and my text, compared with the foregoing verses, discovers him to us in these four views:

1. As offended with his creature man, on the account of sin; *verse* 3. for we are, *by nature, the children of his wrath, we are strangers and enemies in our minds, and by wicked works;* Col. i. 21. We are *afar off from God, without God, and without hope in the world;* Eph. ii. 12. Though this be spoken particularly of the Ephesian idolaters, yet, in a sense, it is true of every man in a state of nature.

2. God appears willing to be reconciled, ready to receive us upon our return to him, in this chapter. In other places of scripture, he is represented sitting on a throne of grace, approachable by sinful creatures; and this is sufficiently implied in verse 4. *He is rich in mercy, and has loved us with great love.*

3. He has appointed his own beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be the Reconciler. We are utterly unworthy of his favour or love; nor will a holy God suffer guilty creatures to come near him, without a proper and honourable Mediator; and since we could not provide ourselves with such a friend, he has appointed his own Son to that office. *God has set him forth to be a propitiation.*

4. He makes us willing to be reconciled: He saves us by free grace, and when he has ordained faith to be the way of our return to him, he works that faith in us by his own Spirit. Verse 8. *By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.*

Let us consider now, what are our duties, according to this representation of the character which God the Father sustains here. From all these things, it plainly follows that, in our religious transactions, we are eminently to look to God the Father, as the person who is our original Maker, Lord, and Sovereign; whose laws we have broken, whose anger we have incurred, and from whom we have separated ourselves by sin: We are to seek peace with him, and reconciliation to him. We must return to him as our rightful Lord, and address ourselves to him, by humble repentance, as sitting on the throne of majesty, and vindicating the rights of godhead: To him we must pray, and apply ourselves eminently to him as the first Spring of mercy, the Author of all grace, and ascribe to him the glory of his condescending wisdom and love: we must offer him our thanks and praises, that he is willing to be reconciled, that he has sent his Son to be the Reconciler, and appointed a way of reconciliation. This is the general current of scripture language, both in precept and in example: and the chapter where my text is, as well as the whole epistle, plainly leads us to this practice.

II. We come next to enquire, more particularly, how Christ, the Son of God, is represented as the medium, through whom we have access to the Father, for our reconciliation is attributed to him, *he is our peace;* verse 14. Now Christ becomes our Mediator of reconciliation, eminently, these five ways:

1. By his incarnation, that is, by taking our flesh and blood upon him: And thus he became a man amongst men: The Son of God, who is one with the Father in godhead, became one with us in human nature. *The word, who was God, and who was with God, the same word was made flesh, and dwelt with us;* John i. 1, 14. When he became Emmanuel, *God with us,* he did not only unite God and man in his own person, but since he came *in the likeness of sinful flesh;* Romans viii. 3. he did, as it were, exemplify an union of peace and reconciliation between a holy God and sinful man. His very incarnation

gave us a pledge of that friendship which he came to restore between God the Creator and his guilty creatures, who were before at enmity, and strangers, both by the apostacy of our first parents, and our own continued rebellions.

2. Christ came to reconcile us to God, by fulfilling perfect obedience to the law, which we had broken, and by sustaining the punishment and death which was due to our sins. This we could never suffer, and outlive the suffering: for the broken law threatened death, but provided no resurrection. Christ Jesus, the Son of God, taking flesh and blood upon him, took our sins also, and became a sacrifice for sin; *he bare our sins in his body on the* cursed *tree;* 1 Pet. ii. 24. and, by his blood, has made complete atonement for sin, has repaired the honour of the law, and government of God, which we had highly dishonoured; and thus he has made a way for the exercise of the mercy and forgiveness of God, without any disgrace to his governing justice; and has laid a happy foundation for our approach to God the Father, though we are, by nature, strangers and rebels, guilty and condemned.

3. Christ ascended to heaven, to present his own sacrifice before the throne of God, even as the High-priest, under the Jewish dispensation, went into the holy of holies, to present the blood of the sacrifice of atonement, and sprinkle it before the mercy-seat. This was the chief glory and perfection of the priesthood of Aaron, and, according to the apostle's reasonings, in the epistle to the *Hebrews, chapters* vii. viii. ix. this seems to be the ultimate glory and perfection of the priesthood of Christ, *viz.* his *entrance into heaven with his own blood, there to appear in the presence of God for us;* Heb. ix. 11, 12, 24. There he presents himself, not only as the Lamb that has been slain, but he appears in his own pure and perfect mediatorial righteousness, before God, in the name of sinful man; as Aaron the high-priest, in the name of the people of Israel, appeared in the most holy place before God; not only with the blood of atonement in his hand, but with holiness to the Lord, inscribed on the mitre, on his forehead; *Ex.* xxviii. 36. God the Father beholds his only begotten Son there, as the great Representative of all his children: He beholds his own law satisfied and fulfilled, in his perfect obedience, even to death: and this is an everlasting foundation for reconciliation and peace between God and sinners.

4. Christ lives for ever to intercede for sinful man, to plead with God for mercy to his guilty creatures. Perhaps, in the nature of things, this is not much different from the former particular; for his presenting of his sacrifice, as for ever fresh in the virtues of it, before the Father, is a sort of intercession. His blood has a voice in it, and his very appearance there, is a powerful pleading. But, however, since the High-priest of old not only presented the atoning blood, but also offered incense in the holy of holies, which is a type of intercession, we may, properly enough, make some distinction between them, and represent these two transactions of Christ as our High-priest, in a distinct light. *He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, since he lives for ever to make intercession for them;* Heb. vii. 25.

5. He is represented as dwelling in heaven, as our great High-priest, not only to present our services, our prayers, and our praises to God, and make them acceptable to the Father, through his infinite merit, notwithstanding all their imperfections, but also to introduce our departing souls into the presence of God, *without spot or blemish;* Eph. v. 27. and *to present his whole church, at the great day, before his own and his Father's glory, with exceeding joy;* Jude 24. This is the last great act of his mediatorial office, and by this,

we obtain a full and complete access to God, to dwell with him for ever, in the regions of light and joy.

Now let us consider, how we ought to regulate our practice in our return from sin, and our approaches to God, in a correspondency with these instances of the mediation of Christ.

From this account of things, it follows, that whensoever we, sinful and guilty creatures, address ourselves to God the Father, it must be done in and by the name and interest of Jesus Christ, as our only Mediator. We must humbly ask forgiveness of our sins, for the sake of the sufferings of the Son of God; we must depend entirely for our acceptance with the Father, on the virtue of his perfect obedience, even to death; and intreat of the Father, that he would be reconciled to us, upon the account of his own Son Jesus, utterly disclaiming all merit and worthiness of our own, renouncing all other saviours, and all other hopes, for Christ alone is the way to God: *No man cometh to the Father but by me;* John xiv. 6.

We must give thanks to the Son of God, for his amazing condescension to take our nature on him, and dwell in flesh and blood; and for his voluntary submission to death, to redeem such guilty creatures as we are. We much trust in him for complete salvation, both from sin and hell, and resign ourselves, as guilty, sinful, and perishing creatures, into his hands, and to his methods of relief. All our prayers, and acts of worship and obedience, must be recommended to the Father by his name, and through his intercession.

After every fresh instance of sin, we must fly to him as our faithful Advocate in heaven, and have daily recourse to him, as our great Sacrifice, and our Mediator; because our sins are daily renewed in this imperfect state. In short, we must surrender ourselves up to him, that he may bring us as near to God, as this present state of things will admit; and, when we are dying, we must commit our departing spirits to him, as Stephen did, that he may present us to his Father, when we leave this sinful and wretched world. Thus we have access to God the Father, by his Son Jesus Christ, who is our great Peace-maker.

I grant that several other necessary duties, which we owe to Christ our Lord, might be mentioned in a more distinct and explicit manner, *viz.* the acknowledging him as our great Prophet, receiving his divine instructions with an humble faith, and imitating his sacred example, with holy care; the submission to him as our Lord and King, yielding a ready and cheerful obedience to his commands, and a humble subjection to his providential dispensations; to which I may add, depending on him for daily grace, and the promised aids of his blessed Spirit, as being appointed of the Father to bestow them; for he is exalted to be a Prince as well as a Saviour; and indeed Christ doth promote this great work of the salvation of men, by his universal government of the visible and invisible worlds, with this view and design, by giving and continuing his gospel, to particular nations, by sending forth his ministers and messengers to invite sinners to be reconciled to God, and by the communication of his Spirit to men. But these things do not appear directly to be the present view of the apostle in my text, while he is describing Christ as a medium of our access and reconciliation to God, chiefly by his death and its influences. And as for the work of the Spirit, that comes next in course to be mentioned.

III. Having shewn the glorious service, which the second person in the Holy Trinity

performs for our salvation, according to my text, we come now to speak of the third, that is, the blessed Spirit of God, who is here represented as one who helps our return or access to God the Father, through Jesus Christ; and this he does, eminently, in the ways following:

1. He convinces us of sin. He makes us see and feel our dreadful state of wretchedness, because of our guilt in the sight of God. Mankind, by nature, are insensible of their own misery, till the Spirit of God is sent to awaken them out of their dead sleep, and make them look after a reconciliation to the infinite majesty of God, whom they have offended. It is the powerful and inward operation of the Spirit, that makes sinners cry out, *What shall I do to be saved?*

2. The Spirit discovers the mercy of God the Father to us, and assures us, that he is willing to be reconciled. This he has done in the word of the gospel, and the promises of grace, which are written and recorded in the Bible by the holy men whom he inspired; and this he reveals also with power and pleasure to the mind of an awakened sinner. Then the guilty soul rejoices that there is forgiveness with God, and conceives some glimmerings of hope.

3. It is the Spirit who effectually reveals Christ Jesus to the soul, as the great Reconciler. He discovers who Christ is, and what he has done for us, and sets him before us in all the glories of his mediation. He makes the soul see the all-sufficiency of his sacrifice to atone for sin, the efficacy of his intercession to prevail with God, and his power to save to the uttermost. And all this is according to the promise of Christ: John xvi. 14. *He shall glorify me; for he shall take the things that are mine, and shew them unto you.* All the teachings of men, and all the words in the Bible, cannot make a sinful creature see such glory in Christ, such grace, and so desirable a salvation, as is done by the enlightening work of the Holy Spirit.

4. It is the Holy Spirit that makes us willing to return to God in this way of his own appointment. It is he that powerfully persuades, and inclines us to part with every sin. He works in the heart of a sinner holy repentance for his past follies; and renews and changes the corrupt nature of man. It is he forms us after the image of God, and gives us a new and divine spirit and temper. *That which is born of the Spirit is spirit;* John iii. 6. He works faith in us with power, even that living faith, whereby we are interested in Christ the Reconciler, and which is the spring of all holiness. It is through the divine operation of the Spirit of God on our hearts, that we are taught to resign ourselves up to Christ, and to commit all our concerns of salvation into his hands. Hereby we become partakers of the benefits of the life and death of Christ on earth, and of his intercession in heaven; for it is the appointment of God, that faith in Christ shall be our only means of drawing near to the Father.

5. The Holy Spirit preserves, and carries on his own divine work, in the soul. What he begun in faith he carries on in love. What he begun in repentance, he carries on by daily mortification of sin. *Faith and love are the fruits of the Spirit;* Gal. v. 22. And it is *by the Spirit, that we must mortify the deeds of the body, if we would live;* Rom. viii. 13. He sanctifies us more and more, and draws our hearts still nearer to God. It is *by the sanctification of the Spirit, and by the belief of the truth, that we are brought to partake of salvation;* 2 Thess. ii. 13. He restores us when we wander, and brings us back when we have gone astray: He fits us for converse with God, and awakens every grace which he has wrought in us, into proper and seasonable exercise.

He assists the soul, in all its devout addresses to God, as a Spirit of prayer and supplication. By him we draw near to the Father. He gives us to taste the pleasure of religion, and prepares us daily for the full enjoyment of God. He dwells in us, as a living spring of holiness, and keeps alive his own work in our hearts, through all the oppositions of indwelling sin, through all the various temptations we meet with from Satan, and from this present world, till we are brought safe to the heavenly kingdom. He gives all the final strokes of sanctification, which may be needful at our death, freeing us from every remaining sin, and completing his own work of holiness in us. Then our blessed Mediator, Christ Jesus, at the right-hand of God, *presents us, without spot or blemish, before the presence of his own and his Father's glory*, and gives us that sensible enjoyment of those everlasting pleasures he hath prepared for us, in that holy and happy world. Now the duties that arise, from this account of the operations of the Holy Spirit, are as follow:

In our approaches to God, in order to obtain peace and favour with him, we must pray, and wait, and hope for the divine influences of this blessed Spirit, to convince us of sin, to make us sincerely willing to be reconciled to God, to give us a clear and affecting sight of Christ, in all the power and glory of his mediatorial office, and to enable us to apply ourselves to Christ, by a living faith, that we may, by him, be brought into the favour of God.

We must pray earnestly to the God of all grace, that he would work deep and unfeigned repentance in us, by his Holy Spirit, that his Spirit might change our natures into his own likeness, and restore his image, which is defaced by sin; that he would send his Spirit to mortify all the corrupt principles that are within us, to lead us into all needful truth, and incline our hearts with power to the practice of every duty. We must ask that he would assist us, by his Spirit, in all the holy and devout exercises of our souls, and enable us to worship God the Father aright, through Jesus Christ, in all his own appointments. We are to pray, that the Spirit of God may preserve the divine seed of grace alive in our souls, that he may recover us whenever we go astray from God, and carry on his own heavenly work in us to perfection.

We must seek and wait for the divine influences of this blessed Spirit continually, to give and to maintain holiness and comfort: And we must take the utmost religious care, lest, at any time, we grieve him, and cause him to depart, by resisting his sacred influences: And thus, with a daily dependance on the grace of the Holy Spirit, we must perpetually approach nearer to God, both in the temper of our souls, and in holy converse with him, till our state of trial be finished, and till the work of holiness is complete in heaven.

It is a very natural inquiry here, whether we may directly address ourselves in prayer to the Son or the Spirit of God, to bestow these divine influences upon us? To which I answer, that the scripture, which is indited by the Spirit himself, generally instructs us to make God the Father the more direct object of our addresses in prayer, and to intreat the Father to bestow his Spirit on us, because it is he sustains the supreme dignity and majesty of godhead, as the Lord and sovereign of all, as the prime Agent in our salvation, and prime object of worship. It is the *Father of lights that is the giver of every good and perfect gift;* James i. 17. It is *the Father that gives his Holy Spirit to them that ask it;* Luke xi. 13. It is *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom St. Paul bowed his knees, that he would strengthen his saints, by his Spirit, in the inner*

man; Eph. iii. 16. And he *prays, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation;* Eph. i. 17. It is evident, by the general current of scripture, both in its counsels and in its examples, that we are chiefly to seek the aids of the blessed Spirit, from God the Father, through the mediation of his Son Christ Jesus; and, doubtless, this always has been, and this will be, the most usual practice of christians, who make the word of God the rule and guide of their worship.*

Yet since Christ, the Son of God, has true godhead belonging to him, and is a proper object of worship, since he is exalted to bestow the promised Spirit on men, it cannot be improper to offer up our addresses to Christ Jesus our Lord, to send us his Spirit according to his promise. *I will send the Comforter to you from the Father;* John xv. 26. And it is manifest that, in the day of temptation, St. Paul addressed our Lord Jesus Christ, for grace to resist it; 2 *Cor.* xii. 8, 9. And, perhaps, when he triumphed in this, that *the power of Christ should rest upon him,* verse 9. he means the Spirit of Christ, in his powerful influences, to resist temptation.

Now, though it be generally agreed that there are no plain and express precepts, or examples of prayers or praises, so directly addressed to the Holy Spirit in all the New Testament, yet since the Holy Spirit is true God, since he is represented, in scripture, in a personal manner, or as a divine Person, and since, in the sacred economy, he is appointed to enlighten, to sanctify, and to comfort us, I think we may, by just inference, derive sufficient ground from scripture, upon some occasions, to offer petitions to the Holy Spirit for his sacred influences, and to give him praise when we have received them: "Enlighten our darkness, O blessed Spirit, guide us into all truth; Sanctify our sinful natures, and fill us with joy and hope in believing. Blessed be the Holy Spirit of God for his divine work, that he has begun in our souls: May it be carried on and perfected unto the great day."

Thus I have finished the second general head of discourse, and shewn that these are the glorious and divine methods, whereby such guilty and sinful creatures as we, have access to God the Father: This is the mediation of his Son Jesus Christ, who procures peace and reconciliation for us; and these are the inward and powerful operations of his Holy Spirit, whereby our hearts are reconciled to God, and trained up to a fitness for his heavenly presence. *In that presence there is a divine fulness of joy, and at his right-hand are pleasures for evermore;* Psalm xvi. 13.

The third general head, contained in my text, is the union of all nations in this last and best of religions which God ever taught the children of men: Both Jews and gentiles have access to the Father in this way, that is, through this one Mediator, and by one Spirit.

From the first apostacy of Adam, till the days of Abraham, all the forms and instituted ordinances of religion, which were given to men, were designed as a general instruction for all the nations of the earth, to shew them in what manner such guilty and sinful creatures might have access to God, and find acceptance with him. And these forms and ordinances, which were of such infinite importance, should have been

* As the second Person is considered as vested with the office of mediation, and the Holy Ghost as the Sanctifier and Comforter, so God the Father, is, in a peculiar manner, the object of our faith, love, and worship. So Peter tells us, 1 Pet. i. 21. *Through Christ we believe in God.* So writes Doctor Owen, in his sermons lately published, and so all our divines practise in their holy ministration.

preserved alive, by constant tradition, amongst all mankind. Whatsoever divine instructions God gave to Adam and Noah, were the appointed methods of worship and access to God for all their posterity, that is, for all the world, till God should reveal some new methods to them; for each of those two patriarchs were the fathers of all mankind; one before, and the other after the flood.

But when God called Abraham, he favoured him, and his household, with peculiar privileges, and appointed to them new and peculiar forms of worship, and access to himself. And here began the distinction of the world into two parts: Some were obliged to the religion of Abraham, the rest left to the religion of Noah. But as most of the posterity of Noah soon forgot the true God, and degenerated into various forms of idolatry, so the religion of Abraham was also, for the most part, lost among the families of Ishmael and the sons of Keturah, and was chiefly retained and practised in the household of Isaac, and in the tribes of Jacob, surnamed Israel.

In the days of Moses large additions were made to the religion of Abraham, and then the family or nation of Israel was, in a special manner, separated to be a peculiar people to God. Their methods of access to God, by priests and sacrifices, by blood and incense, by sprinklings and washings, were very numerous, and continued to be practised in the Jewish nation for many ages, even till the Messiah came, while the gentiles had utterly lost the religion of Noah their father.

But here observe, that all the chief rites and ceremonies of worship, which were ever given to Adam or Noah, to Abraham or Moses, pointed to the great Messiah, and to the religion of Christ. These ceremonies had no power to save, but by virtue of their relation to Christ, the seed of the woman, the great Reconciler who was to come. It was therefore through the mediation of Christ, and by the influence of the blessed Spirit, that Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Israel, that sinful mankind in all nations and in all ages, had ever any true access to God, or were received into his favour; though the person and offices of Christ were in those days concealed under ceremonies, figures, and shadows, and the influences of the blessed Spirit were not quite so clearly revealed. *To them was the gospel preached as well as unto us;* Gal. iii. 8. Heb. iv. 2. the same gospel and the same salvation, but covered with many veils.

It is no wonder then, that when Christ himself, the Son of God and of man, the great Reconciler, was come into the world, and had revealed to men in a clearer light the doctrine of his own mediation, and taught and promised the necessary influences of the Spirit of God; it is no wonder that all other instituted rites and forms of worship should cease, which were only figures and signs of the glorious religion of the New Testament. It is no wonder that all nations should be now required to draw near to God the Father, by the mediation of his own Son, and through the aids of his own Spirit: All nations, I say, wheresoever the sound of this religion has reached, wheresoever this gospel has been published to mankind. This is the universal rule of approach to God for every sinful man, in order to obtain the divine favour. All other forms are, as it were, dissolved and melted down into this one glorious appointment: This is the divine uniformity of religion and worship which God has now ordained among all his saints. Through one Lord Jesus, both Israel, and the rest of the nations, must *have access by one Spirit unto the Father. By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or gentiles, whether we be bond or free;* 1 Cor. xii. 13. And one Spirit, where it prevails gloriously, will lead us into one religion. *As there is but one God, and Father of all, so there must*

be but one Lord and Mediator, and one Holy Spirit: For there must be one faith, one hope, one baptism into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; to whom be glory and praise for ever.

Let us conclude with three Remarks, answerable to the three things contained in my text, which have been the distinct heads of my discourse.

Remark I.—With what rich grace and glory has God condescended to reveal himself to us in the New Testament! It is here God the Father appears eminently to begin, and carry on, the divine affairs of his kingdom, of nature, providence, and grace, by his only begotten Son, and his eternal Spirit. It is here we learn the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh. It is here God hath made known to us, more of his own incomprehensible nature, and his ways of operation among his creatures, than ever the light of nature could find out, or than all the former dispensations of grace did clearly reveal. The great God, the Father of all, manifests himself as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and, in him, as our God, and our Father; hereby he descends into a nearer relation to poor apostate mankind, in order to restore them to his favour, and to his image, to holiness, and eternal peace. He approaches near to us in his Son Jesus, who is the *brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person;* Heb. i. 3. He approaches near us indeed, by sending his Son, who is one with himself, to dwell in flesh; he comes down to us, and visits us, by the influences of his blessed Spirit, and causes our souls to ascend toward him. What rich and condescending love is this! By the same word, and the same Spirit, by which he created the heavens and the earth, does he transact the grand and important affair of peace and reconciliation with his guilty creatures. How divinely glorious is this doctrine of the blessed Trinity! And what an astonishing favour is it, that the sacred Three should join in the work of our salvation!

II. How happily is the gospel suited to the recovery of fallen man, by supplying all his wants in a most divine manner!

Is the great God offended by the sin of man? Behold, he takes upon him in the gospel, the name and title of a Father, to invite perishing rebels to return to his mercy, and he employs his Son, and his Spirit, to give sinners a near access to himself. Are we guilty criminals, condemned rebels, and afar off from God? Behold, the Son of God himself, who is one with the Father, takes flesh and blood upon him, and so far becomes one of us, that he may sustain the punishment of our iniquities, and mediate a peace between God and sinners: And this he does by his powerful intercession, in the virtue of his bloody sacrifice. Is our nature corrupted by sin? Are we grown strangers and enemies to God by our continued rebellions? Behold, the blessed Spirit of God comes into our hearts: His almighty operations can enlighten our dark minds, bend our obstinate wills, change our corrupted affections, and make us willing to return to God in his own way, and to accept the reconciliation. He sends his own Spirit, to create us anew in his own image, and make us fit for his service, and his enjoyment.

We are, by nature, children of Satan, and children of wrath; the great God becomes a Father to us: We are condemned, and the Son of God, dwelling in the flesh, becomes a Reconciler: We are unholy, and the Spirit of God becomes our sanctifier. We have destroyed ourselves beyond all possibility of created help, and God himself becomes our Saviour, and he will be seen in every part of our salvation, a divine Father, a divine Reconciler, and a divine Sanctifier.

III. How well has the blessed God provided for love and union amongst all his true worshippers! He has left them no just ground to contend, and quarrel, or break themselves into little angry parties, for he has now appointed but one religion for them all, one general method of access to him. He has ordained but one mediator Jesus Christ, and has appointed one Spirit, to draw their hearts near to himself. A glorious religion indeed, that unites Jews and gentiles, and mankind of all nations, to the great and blessed God! And what a disgrace is it to this religion, that we should not be more united to one another! *We are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;* Eph. ii. 19. What a most absurd and grievous thing it is, that we, who are brought into such a state of friendship by divine grace, should obey the corrupt dictates of nature, and the lusts of the flesh! that we should quarrel and fight, even in the presence of that God, to whom we have access by the blood of one Mediator, and by the influence of one Spirit! Surely this must be a Spirit of union, and peace, and love, this one Spirit, which reconciles God and man, who were at a dreadful distance, this Spirit which reconciles Jew and gentile, who were mutual strangers and enemies. And how can we suppose we are governed by this uniting Spirit, this Spirit of gentleness, meekness, and friendship, if we indulge the ferments of wrath and revenge in our bosom, if we resolve to carry on strife and contention with the language of railing, and reviling against those who worship the same God, by the same Mediator? How can we hope, that this Spirit has ever reconciled us to God, if we persist in enmity against our brethren? Should we *have all faith, and remove mountains, if we have not love, we are not christians;* 1 Cor. xiii. 2. The very nature and life of christianity, is faith working by love, faith leading the soul to God the Father, through the mediation of Jesus Christ his Son, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, and producing all works of holiness, by the influence of love to God and man. May this be wrought in our hearts, and practised in our whole course of life!

The Recollection.—" Hast thou heard, O my soul, hast thou learned the glorious discoveries, that God has made of himself to fallen creatures, and does not thy heart rejoice within thee, at the sound of such a doctrine, and such a salvation? Has the blessed God revealed himself to thee in his beloved Son, and by his Holy Spirit? And does he invite thee to approach him as a Father, by such a divine Mediator, and such a divine Sanctifier? O let all the powers of thy nature submit with joy to all the discoveries of such a grace! Go, humble thyself before an offended God, who is willing to become a Father and a Friend: Go, in the name of Jesus, the great Mediator, and make thy approaches to the throne. Seek the influences of the Holy Spirit to enlighten thy dark understanding, to conquer the obstinacy of thy will, and subdue all thy affections, to a sincere compliance with this method of divine love; And let the constraining force of this sweet doctrine unite thy heart to all thy fellow-christians, who sincerely worship the same God, who seek for acceptance through the blood of the same Mediator, and who depend upon the aids of the same Spirit.

" Happy day, when faith, and holiness, and love, shall be found shining, and reigning amongst all that profess the religion of Christ! O when shall that promised hour appear, that *the Lord Jehovah shall be king over all the earth, and there shall be one Lord, and his name one?* Zech. xiv. 9. Blessed Jesus, hast thou, by thy death, *broken down that middle wall of partition, that stood between the Jews and the gentiles? Hast thou reconciled both unto God in one body by thy cross, and slain the enmity thereby?* Eph. ii. 16.

What wretched creatures are we then to build up new walls of partition ourselves, by inventing and imposing new forms of faith and worship, which thy word has not taught us, and for which it has given us no foundation! What wretched creatures are we, to raise up so many new enmities in the christian church, and support them with fierce and implacable zeal and fury! This is to walk as enemies, even to the cross of Christ, and contrary to the compassionate designs of a dying Saviour. One would think, the blood of the Son of God crucified should teach us kinder lessons. O when shall all these enmities be abolished by the overpowering influence of the Spirit of light and love? When shall these unhappy walls of partition be broken down, and the whole flock of Christ become one blessed fold under Jesus, the universal Shepherd? When shall we arrive at the *perfect unity of the faith, and maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of love?* Eph. iv. 3, 13. When shall the glory and beauty of the primitive church be restored, where *the multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and one soul;* Acts iv. 32. united in one faith and hope, by the almighty influences of one Spirit? Come, blessed Redeemer, come and accomplish thy own gracious words of promise: Let there be one fold and one Shepherd; and let thy blood and thy Spirit, by which we have access to one God, even the Father, cement all our hearts to each other in such an union as shall never be dissolved. Then shall we join with all the creation in one eternal song, even the song which thy word has taught us: *Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever;* Rev. v. 13. *Amen.*

HYMN FOR SERMON XLIV.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY, AND THE USE OF IT; OR, ACCESS TO THE FATHER, THROUGH CHRIST, BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.

I.

FATHER of glory, to thy name
Immortal praise we give,
Who dost an act of grace proclaim,
And bid us, rebels, live.

II.

Immortal honour to the Son,
Who makes thy anger cease;
Our lives he ransom'd with his own,
And dy'd, to buy our peace.

III.

To thy almighty Spirit be
Immortal glory giv'n,
Whose influence brings us near to thee,
And trains us up for heav'n.

IV.

Let men, with their united voice,
Adore th' eternal God,
And spread his honours, and their joys,
Through nations far abroad.

V.

Let faith, and love, and duty join,
One general song to raise,
And saints in earth and heav'n combine,
In harmony and praise.

SERMON XLV.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD BY THE LIGHT OF NATURE, TOGETHER WITH THE USES OF IT, AND ITS DEFECTS.

ACTS xiv. 15, 16, 17.

THE LIVING GOD, WHICH MADE HEAVEN AND EARTH, AND THE SEA, AND ALL THINGS THAT ARE THEREIN: WHO IN TIMES PAST SUFFERED ALL NATIONS TO WALK IN THEIR OWN WAYS. NEVERTHELESS HE LEFT NOT HIMSELF WITHOUT WITNESS, IN THAT HE DID GOOD, AND GAVE US RAIN FROM HEAVEN, AND FRUITFUL SEASONS, FILLING OUR HEARTS WITH FOOD AND GLADNESS.

WHEN the apostle Paul gave authority to his ministrations at Lystra, by working a miraculous cure on a man who was born a cripple, the inhabitants imagined that he and Barnabas were gods, and were immediately preparing a sacrifice for them; but to divert this madness and superstition of paying divine worship to creatures, the apostles, with holy jealousy and indignation, ran into the midst of them, and preached to them the living and the true God. "We, say they, are utterly unworthy of these divine honours; for we are men of such flesh and blood as yourselves, and are liable to the like infirmities; we preach to you, that ye should turn from these vanities to the living God, who made heaven and earth, &c."

From which words we may raise these three distinct observations:

I. "God may be known by the light of nature." Surely he that made mankind, and doth them so much good, hath given them some hints and notices of himself; "He hath not left himself without witness."

II. "The knowledge of God, which is attainable by the light of nature, hath its various uses;" of which this is one, that it is a witness for God and his goodness among men.

III. "Yet this knowledge of God, by the light of nature, hath great defects and imperfections in it." Notwithstanding all this knowledge, which is within the reach of men, yet all the nations of mankind besides the Jews, continued to walk in their own ways, their ways of idolatry, of wild superstition and various wickedness. It is said indeed, that God suffered them to walk thus; not that he ever permitted them to do it as a Governor; but as a Creator and a Sovereign, he neither restrained them from it by his almighty power, nor by such special revelations of grace as he made to the Jewish nation, and their own natural knowledge did not secure them from it.

Let us begin with the first observation, *viz.* I. "God may be known by the light of nature." When I use the word God, I mean here the same thing which the lowest rank of mankind would understand by it, that is, the Being which made all things; or, in more learned language, the First Cause of all. And when I say, God may be known by the light of nature, I mean, that the senses and the reasoning power which belong to the

nature of man, are able to give him so much light in seeking after God, as to find out something of him thereby, or to gain some knowledge of him. By our senses we are acquainted with his works, and by his works our reason may be led to trace out that more excellent Being who made them. This is asserted beyond all dispute. Rom. i. 19. 20. *That which may be known of God is manifest in them, that is, in men, for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are, or may be, clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead.* Now if we enquire more particularly, what it is that we can learn of God by the light of nature, I answer in the following particulars:

1. We may come to the knowledge of his existence, or that there is such a glorious Being who made all things.

This is evident and certain, that nothing could make itself. It is impossible, that any thing which once had no being, should ever give being to itself; or that once upon a time it should of itself burst out of nothing, and begin to be. Since therefore there is a world with millions of beings in it, which are born and die, it is certain there is some Being, who had no beginning, but had life in himself from all eternity, and who gives life and being to all other things. This is the Being whom we call God.

Of all the visible beings that we are acquainted with, man is the highest and most noble; but he is forced to confess he is not his own maker. By sending our thoughts and enquiries a little backwards, we find that we came into being but a few years ago; and we are daily convinced, that we perish and die in long succession. Our parents, or our ancestors, were no more able to make themselves than we are; for most of them are dead, and the rest are going the way of all flesh: They cannot preserve our lives, nor their own; and therefore it is plain, that though we borrowed life from them at first, yet they are not the original and self-sufficient authors of life and being to themselves, or to us; they are but instruments in the hands of some superior First Cause, some original and eternal Maker of us all.

Or if some atheist should say, we must run up from son to father, and from father to grandfather, in endless generations, without a beginning, and without any first cause; I answer, that is impossible; for if ten thousand generations cannot subsist of themselves without dependance on something before them, neither can infinite or endless generations subsist of themselves without dependance. Suppose a chain of ten thousand links hung down from the sky, and could not support itself unless some mighty power upheld the first link: then it is certain, a chain of ten thousand times ten thousand links, or an endless chain, could never support itself. As the chain grows longer and heavier, the addition of new links can never make the chain more independent, or better support itself.

There must be therefore some first bird, some first beast, some first man, from whom all these succeeding generations begun, and since they are all dead, and could not preserve themselves out of their own original sufficiency, it is certain they could not make themselves; they all must depend therefore on some mighty Being, who has ever lived, and will ever live, and who is the First Cause and Maker of all things besides himself. Further argument for the being of a God will appear under the next particular.

2. We learn by the light of nature what God is, *viz.* that he is a Spirit, perfect in wisdom and perfect in power, who knows all things and can do all things, or who is all-wise and almighty.

The amazing works of God in the heavens, the sun, moon, and stars, their regular and unerring motions for so many thousand years, the progess of the hours, the changes of day and night, winter and summer, which depend on these motions and revolutions, they all abundantly discover that the Maker of them was wise, and skilful beyond all our conceptions. If we observe the operations of a clock or watch, which doth but imitate the motions of these heavenly bodies, and point out to us the day and the hour, and distinct seasons; we say, it is impossible this curious engine could be made without great wisdom and skill in some artificer who contrived it; and can we be so foolish as to imagine, that this vast and glorious engine of the heavens, with all its bright furniture, which makes times and seasons, day and night, could ever come into being by chance, or be made without wisdom or contrivance.

The wonderful production of plants, herbs, trees and flowers, the astonishing operations of living creatures and their several parts and powers fitted for the proper ends and designs of their life, discover to us the deep wisdom and knowledge of the Being that made them. When we observe the strange and surprizing actions of some animals, of dogs or foxes, of hen and chickens, of bees and emmets, we can scarce withhold ourselves from ascribing knowledge and reason to them; and is it possible that the Being which made these active animals should not have understanding and reason, and that far superior to all his creatures? Should Mr. Boyle, or Sir Isaac Newton descend from heaven, and begin a complete lecture on this subject, it would last for years, for ages, even to the end of time; and every instructive moment would acquaint us with some new glories of the Creator.

Let us consider but our own natures, our parts and powers: What wonders are contained in every sense! In the eye, what millions of objects are painted continually on one spot of that little ball, and transferred inward to the brain in all their distinct colours and shapes, and are beheld without confusion there! What varieties of sounds and voices, language and harmony, are taken in and distinguished by the ear in its winding caverns! How very various are the tastes and smells that we partake of by the palate and the nostrils! How happily contrived is our sense of feeling, not confined to one part, but diffused throughout the whole body, and to give speedy notice of every thing within us, or without us, that may hurt our frame! What a wonderful instrument is the tongue, to convey our thoughts in ten thousand sounds to our fellow-creatures! And what an excellent being is the principle of thought within us, even our souls or spirits, which can not only take in and converse about all the millions of objects, which our senses give us notice of; but millions more of numbers and quantities and intellectual ideas which our senses cannot reach! Now can all these be formed without infinite wisdom and skill? I might demand of the sons of atheism, in the language of the Psalmist; Psal. xciv. 9. 10. *He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that gives knowledge to man, shall he not know?* He that made spirits, hath not he all the powers of a Spirit in him, in a most transcendant manner and degree?

And as the wonders of contrivance in the works of God declare his depth of wisdom, so the difficulty of creating them out of nothing argues his almighty power. *When we survey the heavens, the work of his hands, the moon and the stars, which he hath created;* Psal. viii. 3. what a glorious and powerful Being must that be, which formed these vast bodies at first, and which upholds their stupendous frame! What an almighty voice was necessary to call this whole universe, these heavens, and earth, and seas, with all

the hosts of them, out of nothing into being, and constrain them to obey the call! Man can only change the shapes and qualities of things: He can make a clock indeed, an elegant engine to measure time; but he must have brass and iron given him, for he cannot create these materials, though he gave them a new form: But God's huge and astonishing engine of the heavens, whereby hours and days, seasons and ages are made and measured out, were all formed by him without any materials: He made all the materials himself, and gave all the wheels of nature and time their very being, as well as their shapes and their motions, and they continue to observe his orders. A Creator must be almighty, he must be God. Again,

Let us think within ourselves, what a powerful Being must that be, who can make a soul, a spirit, a thinking being to exist, so nearly like himself, with such a faculty of understanding as to be capable of taking in so many millions of ideas, and forming the figures of the skies and the seas, and the thousands of plants and animals, which are found upon this earth, each in their proper proportion? An understanding capable of knowing the works of God, and of knowing God himself? How powerful is the divine will, which could make a creature with a free will, to determine its own choice, a will which can move all this frame of flesh and blood, and by these limbs can give motion to ten thousand other bodies round about us! What a glorious power must that be, who could create such an image of himself as a human spirit is, and which bears such a near resemblance of his own perfections, both in his understanding and his will, in his knowledge and his power. We are his image, we are his offspring. Thus sung Aratus the heathen poet, in *Acts* xvii. 28, 29. and spoke like a christian.

And thus it appears beyond all controversy, that the light of nature finds there is a God, and that this God is an allwise and almighty Spirit. If we were in doubt about his existence or being, these reasonings would assure us of it; and if we seek after his nature and his perfections, these his works discover them.

3. Another thing which we learn by the light of nature, is his supreme and absolute dominion over all things, that God is the sovereign Lord and Possessor of heaven and earth, so *Gen.* xiv. 19. and consequently that he hath a right to dispose of all things as he pleases; Rom. ix. 20. *Who therefore shall say unto him, What dost thou? Shall the thing formed say to him that hath formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?* Shall the vessel say to the potter, Why didst thou mould me in such a form? Why was I disposed of in such a station? And why was I appointed for such a purpose? And the force of this argument grows yet much stronger, when we consider, that the great God not only gives his creatnres their form and manner of being, but he created the very substance as well as the qualities of every thing, and gave them their whole nature and all the being they have.

4. The light of nature teaches us, that though God is the absolute and natural Lord of all things that he has made; yet "he is pleased to deal with his rational creatures in a way of moral government, that he rules them by a law, and will some time or other reward them in equity according to their works." The conscience which he hath formed in man, may discover to him so much of the natural law and will of his God, as a righteous Governor of the world, if it be properly and wisely employed: Rom. ii. 14. 15. *The gentiles which have not the written law which the Jews enjoyed, yet they do by nature the things contained in the law*, that is, they are inwardly excited to do them; *these having not the law, are a law to themselves, which shew the work of the law written in*

their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing them.

This law written in their hearts, and which they may find out by a diligent use of their reason, not only teaches them that adoration and worship, prayer and praise, are duties which they owe to God; but it instructs them also to distinguish between vice and virtue, good and evil, as it relates to their neighbours and themselves. It shews them the difference between sobriety and intemperance, between kindness and malice, between honesty and knavery, truth and falsehood; and it teaches them also to expect some vengeance to fall upon transgressors. So Acts xxviii. 4. *Surely this man is a murderer*, said the barbarous inhabitants of Melita, concerning St. Paul, when a viper fastened on his hand; *and though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance doth not suffer him to live.*

Reason and conscience might teach mankind, that since God has given them an understanding and freedom of will to choose or refuse good or evil, he will certainly call them to account for their behaviour, and will take some opportunity to judge, reward, and punish according to their conduct in the present state. In their own consciences there is a kind of tribunal erected before hand, their conscience excusing or accusing them, as a sort of warning, an emblem and fore-runner of divine judgment.

5. The light of nature teaches us further, that God is an universal Benefactor to mankind, even above and beyond their deserts, and notwithstanding all their provocations. The words of my text declare, that though they *walked in their own idolatrous ways, yet God left them not without witness of his goodness, giving them—fruitful seasons, and filling their hearts with food and gladness.* Their own consciences tell them they have sinned, and forfeited all favours from heaven; but their very senses assure them, that God does not presently insist upon the forfeiture, nor seize away their blessings; but that he waits long, and heaps the instances of his goodness upon them, even upon the evil and the unthankful in the midst of all their iniquities and unthankfulness. Thus have I shewn particularly what it is the light of nature teaches us concerning God.

II. The second general head of discourse leads us to enquire, what are the various uses of this knowledge of God, which is attainable by the light of nature. I answer in general, it is to bear witness for God in the world. But we must enter into particulars.

1. This knowledge of God, as our Maker and Governor, by the light of nature, is useful, "Not only to shew men their duty, but to convince them of sin against the law of God, and to lay all mankind under a sense of guilt and self-condemnation." The apostle Paul begins with this doctrine in the first chapters of his epistle to the Romans, where his great design is to shew mankind the guilt and wretchedness of their state; for after he had introduced this natural knowledge of God, in the nineteenth verse of the first chapter, he proceeds to convince the heathen world, and particularly the philosophers, of their heinous iniquities against God and man, and leaves them in the middle of the second and third chapters, under the condemnation of their own consciences and the law of God: "*all have sinned and come short of that glory of God,*" which they should have originally obtained by perfect righteousness.

2. This knowledge of God by the light of nature, "as it is designed to awaken men to the practice of their duty; so it has had some influence on mankind, at least by the fear of punishment, to keep, preserve, and restrain part of them from the extremest degrees of wickedness." This natural conscience is the candle of the Lord, which he

has set up in the heart of man; and though it shines but dimly, yet it has sometimes kept them from being so vile and abominable, and from running into such excess of outrage and madness, as otherwise they would have done. There have been some outward virtues practised among the Greeks and the Romans, who had a little knowledge of a superior divine power.

There was some temperance, some truth, some honour, justice and goodness, now and then appearing among the multitudes of their vices: there was a secret horror within, and a foreboding of some divine vengeance, that withheld them now and then from the practice of villany, especially in the extravagant degrees of it. This natural knowledge of God amongst the heathen nations, has been found there like a small quantity of salt, to preserve some part of mankind in those countries from being utterly over-run with corruption and putrefaction; and has answered some valuable purposes in the government of God among men. Where there has been nothing of this knowledge, mankind have almost lost their superior rank among the creatures, and degenerated into a brutal nature.

3. This natural knowledge of God and his goodness, "gives some encouragement to guilty creatures to repent of their sins, and to return to God by a general hope of acceptance, though they had no promise of pardoning grace. And this was the very principle upon which some of the better sort of the gentiles set themselves to practise virtue, to worship God and endeavour to become like him.*

4. This natural knowledge of God, which is attainable by the light of nature, serves to vindicate the conduct of God, as a righteous Governor in his severe dealings with obstinate and wilful sinners, both here and hereafter. This will leave them without excuse in the great day, when God shall judge the secrets of all hearts. Their own consciences will accuse them, and bear witness against them. *Rom.* i. 20, 21. and ii. 15. *Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance on such sinners? God forbid; for how then shall he judge the world?* Rom. iii. 5, 6. As there have been many instances of a righteous

* I do not say that natural religion can give sinful men a full and satisfying assurance of pardon upon their repentance; for the deepest degrees of penitence cannot oblige a prince to forgive the criminal; but still the overflowing goodness of God, his patience and long-suffering, notwithstanding their sins, may evidently and justly excite in their hearts some hope of forgiving grace: and I think the words of my text cannot intend less than this, that *God has not left them without witness, when he gave them rain from heaven, when he satisfied their appetites with food, and filled their hearts with gladness.* What was it that these benefits of their Creator bore witness to? Was it not that there was goodness and mercy to be found with him, if they would return to their duty, and abandon their own ways of idolatry and vice? Surely, it can never be supposed, that the apostle here means no more than to say, that the daily instances of divine bounty in the common comforts of life, assured them, that God had some goodness in him, and blessings to bestow on their bodies; but gave them no hope of his acceptance of their souls, if they should return and repent never so sincerely. The Ninevites themselves, when threatened with destruction, *repented in sackcloth and ashes; for, said they, who can tell but God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?* Nor were they mistaken in their hope; for *God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way, and he repented of the evil that he had threatened;* Jonah iii. 5—10. And there is yet a more express text to this purpose; Rom. ii. 4. *Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?* And if God leads us to repentance, by a sense of his goodness, surely he gives hope that our repentance shall not be in vain: and though, perhaps, I could not affirm it with boldness, and certainty by mere light of reason, yet I may venture to declare, upon the encouragement of these scriptures, that if there should be found any sinner in the heathen world, who shall be thus far wrought upon by a sense of the goodness of God, as to be led sincerely to repent of sin and seek after mercy, God would find a way to make a discovery of so much of the gospel, as was necessary for him to know, rather than such a penitent sinner should be left under condemnation, or that a guilty creature should go on to eternal death in the way of repentance. Cornelius, the centurion, who feared God, who prayed to him daily, and wrought righteousness, according to the light of his conscience, had both an angel and an apostle sent to him, that he might receive more complete instruction in the matters of his salvation. *Acts* x. 1—6, and from 30—35.

providence in the present life whereby the great God has already *revealed his wrath from heaven against the unrighteousness and ungodliness of the heathen world:* Rom. i. 18. So in the world to come, not one condemned sinner shall be able to say, God is unjust: Every mouth shall be stopped, and the heavens and the earth proclaim his righteousness, when he shall appear in his Son Jesus at the last day, as the judge of all mankind.

5. This knowledge of God by natural light prepares the way for preaching and receiving the gospel of his grace: and that he doth many ways, *viz.* Unless men are first acquainted that there is a God, who can make known his mind and will to men, what ground is there for preaching any discoveries of his mind and will amongst them? Unless the heathens are taught that he is a God of all knowledge, and cannot be deceived himself; and that he is kind and good, true and faithful, and will not deceive his creatures, how can they be persuaded to believe what he reveals? Unless they are instructed by the light of reason, that he is an Almighty God and the Lord of Nature, how can any miracle give testimony to the truth of what he reveals? For it is as the Sovereign Lord of nature, that he sets the seal of a miracle to his divine truths; a miracle which is above the power of nature to work.

Again, when sinners, by the light and law of nature in their own consciences are laid under conviction of sin and guilt, and they are in fear of the wrath of God, they become more ready to receive the gospel of pardon and salvation as glad tidings from heaven.

We see the great apostle St. Paul wisely managing his ministry to the Athenians, of which we have but short hints in *Acts* xvii. 22—30. By discoursing first on natural religion, he comes at last to awaken men to repentance, and preaches Jesus with the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment, *verse* 31. And agreeably to this method of propagating the gospel among the heathen nations, we find, in fact, that where there was any thing of the knowledge of the true God, either by the light of nature, or by tradition, there the gospel was soonest received; the minds of men were better fitted and prepared for faith in Christ, the Son of God, by this degree of knowledge of God the Father. Those who in the book of the Acts are stiled the devout persons and such as feared God, they acknowledged the one living and true God, and worshipped him; and they much more readily complied with the gospel of grace, and the tidings of a Saviour, than the idolaters who had these other lessons to learn first. Thus having shewn the various uses of this knowledge of God by the light of nature, I proceed in the third place to consider, what are the defects or imperfections of it.

1. "It is but a small portion of the things of God, which the bulk of mankind can generally be supposed to learn merely by their own reasonings." This is sufficiently evident by the history of past times and ancient nations, as well as by present observation of the heathen world. Though some of the philosophers, particularly the followers of Plato and Pythagoras, attained some considerable knowledge of the nature of God, and clearly saw *his eternal power and godhead*, as it is expressed, *Rom.* i. 20. yet these were but very few in comparison of the rest of men; the bulk of mankind, even in the learned nations, as well as the rude and barbarous countries, did actually know but little of the true God, or of their duty towards him, or the way of obtaining future happiness."

2. The light of nature even in those things which it did teach the heathen world, is but dim and feeble, and leaves mankind under many doubts and uncertainties in matters of considerable importance. A short lesson of knowledge in the heathen schools was obtained with long toil and difficulty; their philosophy was rather a feeling after God in

the dark, than a sight of him in day-light: so the apostle expresses himself, when he is talking to the Athenians, who were the most learned of mankind; Acts xvii. 27. *That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him.* What feeble words are these? How doubtful a knowledge is represented by them? How wretchedly did their wise men wander astray and bewilder themselves in their dark and blundering searches after the true God: What endless contests are found amongst them, whether there was a God, and what was his nature, and what was his will, and what was their duty! Into what gross mistakes and shameful falsehoods did they plunge themselves, for want of a better guide than their own reasonings? and how generally, and almost without exception, did their philosophers comply with the idolatry, of their country, and *worshipped God in the form of beasts and birds, and creeping things, and changed the truth of God into a lie; or the true God into false and shameful images;* Rom. i. 23, 25.

Sometimes appetite and passion, pride and humour, spread a mist over the understanding of the heathens; sometimes the customs and traditions of their nation, the authority of their ancestors, or their philosophers, or their own vile prejudices of various kinds, gave them a false clue, and set them running upon a wrong scent: In other places, the tyranny of their princes, and the folly and superstitious madness of their priests, either led or drove them far away from the truth. What shameful vices were authorized by some of their great men! Theft, in some places was commended as a feat of dexterity, and revenge as a point of honour; while public robberies of nations were the glory of their heroes. The murder and ravage of whole countries, were allowed for the enlargement of their dominions, and the blood of kingdoms was made an offering to the ambition of neighbour-kings. In some countries, the youth and flower of conquered nations were doomed a sacrifice to their idols; and sometimes filthy and abominable lewdness were the ceremonies of their worship. How blind was the eye of their reason, not to see this madness! And how feeble its power, that it made no remonstrances against these lewd and bloody scenes of pretended piety!

All these instances indeed do not effectually prove, that reason could not possibly teach them better; but the experience of long ages, and of whole nations, sufficiently shew us, that their reason neither did inform them better, nor was ever likely to do it. Even the best of the philosophers could give us but a sorry system of religion compared with our Bible; so that St Paul roundly expresses it; 1 Cor. i. 21. *The world by wisdom knew not God.*

3. "All the knowledge of God which they arrived at, by the light of nature, had actually little influence to reform the hearts, or the lives of mankind." I say, it had but little influence in comparison of what it might, or should have had; for this knowledge of God, which was attained by their own reason, *suffered the gentile nations to walk in their own ways,* as my text expresseth it; *Acts* xiv. 16. Wretched and perverse ways of idolatry and mad superstition, with regard to God, and falsehood, treachery, hatred, malice, envy, towards their fellow-creatures. See the iniquities numbered up in a large and detestable catalogue; *Rom.* i. 23—32. The histories of the heathen world confirm these dismal accounts given us by the sacred writers, and enforce the charge upon them with abundant proof. And it is no wonder at all, that this knowledge had so little influence on the generality of mankind, when so few of them ever attained it, when it was so imperfect as to the discoveries of it, and so dim and feeble in its evidences. It came

into their heads a little, but it reached not to their hearts: or if it did touch them, it was but feebly, and with very small authority, and was not enforced upon the conscience with *Thus saith the Lord.* A single sentence, with this preface, has vastly greater power on the hearts and consciences of men, than whole volumes of their dark uncertain reasonings.

4. This knowledge of God by the light of nature, "doth rather serve to shew men their sin and misery, than discover any effectual relief;" and in this respect, it comes infinitely short of what the revelation of the gospel of Christ has done. It lays them under guilt and a sentence of death in their own consciences; but it discovers not the plain and certain way of salvation and life: The hope that it gives is but feeble, and there are but few who could spell it out.*

Thus I have finished the three general heads of my discourse. I have shewn you as fully as such a narrow space of time would permit, that there is some knowledge of God to be attained by the light of nature, that this knowledge is made subservient to some valuable purposes in the providence and government of God; but that it hath such a variety of imperfections and defects, that considered in itself, it gives but feeble influences to repentance and holiness, and very doubtful and uncomfortable ground for a sure and satisfying hope to rest upon.

I proceed to make a few reflections on this discourse.

Reflection I.—Since the rational knowledge of God and natural religion has its proper uses, and especially to lay a foundation for our receiving the gospel of Christ, let it not be despised or abandoned by any of us. There may be some necessary occasions for our recourse to it in a day of temptation, when our faith of the gospel may be tried and shaken. The gospel with all its glories is built upon it as a solid foundation; and if these foundations be destroyed or despised, we may be terribly shaken, and beat off

* This might be exemplified in several particulars. The light of nature of itself, gives no assurance of forgiveness to the repenting sinner; for the repentance of men is no compensation to a holy God, to God as a Governor of the world, for their perpetual rebellious against his laws, and the daily dishonour done to his authority. Such knowledge as the Ninevites had, *Jonah* ii. 9. when they said, *Who can tell but the Lord may turn away from his fierce anger?* is but a feeble motive to repentance and new obedience, in comparison of such a word from God himself; as Exod. xxxiv. 6. *And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,—forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin.* Prov. xxviii. 13. *He that confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall find mercy.*

The light of nature discovers no effectual atonement for sin, nor relief to a guilty conscience, by all the costly sacrifices and blood of animals; but the gospel points us to the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world," and assures us that *if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all unrighteousness;* John i. 29. and 1 John i. 7, 9. The light of nature points us to no effectual Mediator, or Advocate in heaven; but the gospel leads us to Jesus, the righteous, as our *Advocate with the Father,* and by pardoning grace, encourages us to love and obey a reconciled God; 1 *John* ii. 1, 2. The light of nature, and our daily experience, discover to us our weakness to subdue sin within us, to restrain our unruly appetites, to mortify our corrupt affections, to resist the daily temptations that surround us; but it points us not to the Fountain of Strength, even the promised aids of the Holy Spirit; these are the peculiar glories and blessings of the gospel of Christ, which the light of nature could never reveal.

The light of nature and continual observation shew us, that we must die, but give us no clear and certain evidence of happiness after death, for such sinful creatures as we are, even in the midst of our repentances: For since our daily sins and offences are so numerous, and the best of our righteousnesses and duties are so very defective, the man of virtue and penitence might hope indeed to escape punishment; but he might well doubt of any future happiness, notwithstanding all the comfort the light of nature could give him, or all the discoveries it could make. But the gospel sets these future glories in a divine and certain light before every man, who reads or hears it. It encourages us to repentance of sin, to diligence, patience, and perseverance, in the ways of faith and holiness, by the joys unspeakable, which are set before us, and builds our hope of eternal life on the well-attested promises of a God, who cannot lie, and the Son of God who has power given him to perform them all.

from all our hope in some evil and unhappy hour. This gives us a rational ground for our faith in God, and it is necessary in order to our faith in Christ Jesus, his Son. As St. Paul made glorious use of it in his discourse with the Athenian infidels, so we may be called by providence to converse with atheists and unbelievers, and we should be furnished with the same doctrines and principles of argument; for so far as they are just and true, they are divine, since they proceed from God, as the God of nature, who is the Author of our reasoning powers, as well as of all the revelations of grace.

II. Since this knowledge of God, which is attainable by the light of nature, has so many defects, let us never venture to rest in it. Dare not content yourselves with the lessons of the book of nature, which are very imperfect and obscure, in comparison of the discoveries of the book of grace. The sun in the firmament, with the moon and all the stars, can never give us that light to see God, which is derived from the Sun of Righteousness.

What a deplorable thing is it, that multitudes in our nation, where the glory of the blessed gospel shines with such brightness, should be running back to the glimmering light of nature, and satisfy themselves with heathenism and philosophy! That they should choose to walk in twilight as the happiest and safest way, and refuse to be conducted by the blaze of noon, as though it were a deceitful and foolish light! What an affront against the authority and mercy of the God of heaven, to renounce his brightest blessings! *The God of this world hath blinded the eyes of them who believe not;* 2 Cor. iv. 4. and we have reason to fear, he is leading them blindfold to eternal darkness.

III. Since the nations, which have only the light of nature, are forced to feel out their way to God through such dusky glimmerings, let us bless the Lord with all our souls, that we are born in Great Britain, a land of clear light, where the gospel shines in its beauty and power, and surrounded with various evidences; a land where the book of grace lies open before us, as well as the book of nature, to teach us the knowledge of God, and his salvation. Let us say within ourselves, and why was not I born a poor ignorant African, a wild Indian, ignorant of God, and averse to seek after him, and without any person near me to give me one beam of light, and point out my way to happiness? Why was not I left merely to the dumb and silent lectures of the heavens, and the earth and sea, or the instruction of the trees, and plants and beasts of the earth, to teach me the knowledge of him that made me? Who am I, that I should be brought into being in the midst of sun-beams, and not in a region of thick darkness under the shadow of death? Everlasting glory be given to distinguishing grace.

O how should we value the Bible as our highest treasure, which gives us such blessed discoveries of God, and his wisdom and power, and his mercy in Christ; which infinitely exceeds all the doubtful twilight of nature, and our own powers of reasoning. O may the blessed Bible lie next our heart, and be the companion of our bosoms! It is this lays a sure foundation for our recovery from all our guilt, and ruin and wretchedness. You that have any concern for your eternal interests, love the Bible, walk by the rules of it, and live upon its promised grace; and I dare pronounce, in the name of God and his Son, that you shall be for ever happy.

IV. Pity and pray for the heathen world, the dark corners of the earth, the benighted nations, where the Sun of Righteousness never rose, and where they can but feel after God through the mists of ignorance and error. Let us remember those ancient times

when our forefathers in this nation were led away into the same errors and gross idolatries, and exercise our compassion toward those who are still left under the same darkness. Now and then, O christians, send a pathetic sigh over the nations, lift up one compassionate groan to heaven for them, and say, "When shall the day come, O Lord, that the heathens shall become thy worshippers, and Assyria and Ethiopia thy people? When wilt thou reveal thyself to the poor African idolaters, and the savage tribes of America, that know not God? When shall the ends of the earth learn to know thee, and rejoice in Jesus thy Son the Saviour? When shall all nations, people and languages, begin their songs of *Salvation to him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb, who has redeemed us with his own blood? To him be dominion and glory for ever and ever.* Amen.

SERMON XLVI.

GOD'S ELECTION OF A PEOPLE FOR HIMSELF AMONG MEN, AND GIVING THEM TO HIS SON IN THE COVENANT OF REDEMPTION.

EPH. i. 3, 4, 5.

BLESSED BE THE GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, WHO HATH BLESSED US WITH ALL SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS IN HEAVENLY PLACES IN CHRIST; ACCORDING AS HE HATH CHOSEN US IN HIM BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD, THAT WE SHOULD BE HOLY AND WITHOUT BLAME BEFORE HIM IN LOVE: HAVING PREDESTINATED US INTO THE ADOPTION OF CHILDREN BY JESUS CHRIST TO HIMSELF, ACCORDING TO THE GOOD PLEASURE OF HIS WILL.

IF we enquire who are the persons thus *blessed with all spiritual blessings, chosen to be holy, and predestinated to become the children of God,* the little word *us* points plainly to the apostle Paul himself, who wrote this epistle, who was a Jew, and the converted Ephesians, to whom he wrote, who were gentiles. These were the persons thus favoured of God. It does not seem to me to be the design of this text, to tell us that God chose part of the Ephesians, as well as other gentiles to be an outward visible church, with mere visible privileges, as the nation of the Jews were of old, who were a type and figure of the church invisible; but that he chose some Jews and some gentiles to be parts of his invisible church, for they are said to be blessed with spiritual blessings, with the privilege of adoption, and the real work of holiness and divine love in their hearts. All the following parts of this and the next chapter seem plainly to declare this sense.

If we ask how, or by what medium this grace was exercised, we are informed, it was all in and through Jesus the Son of God; they are blessed in Jesus Christ, they are chosen in him, and through him they are adopted, or made children and heirs. Without entering nicely into all the meanings of these words, chosen in him, I shall content myself at present in general to say, that when they were first chosen to be made holy and heirs of heaven, they were committed to the care of Christ, to have all this grace fulfilled in them, and these blessings conveyed to them. Having said thus much with relation to the text, I shall immediately apply myself to the two great branches of the subject appointed me, and which are both expressed in the words:

I. That God, before he made the world, chose some persons of his own free grace to become his children, or to be made holy and happy.

II. That God from the beginning appointed his Son Jesus Christ to be the medium of exercising all this grace, and gave his chosen people to the care of his Son, to make them partakers of these blessings. Let us consider each of these heads more at large.

First, God chose certain persons of his own free grace, before the foundation of the world, to be made holy and happy. This I shall endeavour to prove briefly in four plain propositions:

Proposition I. "There is a manifest difference between the children of men in this world." Some of them are holy and religious, they fear God and worship him, they appear to be the children of God, for they imitate his holiness, they love and obey him, they practise virtue and goodness in this life, and are aspiring to the blessedness of heaven; while the rest go on to indulge their vicious appetites and passions, to pursue earthly things as their chief good, and are walking evidently in the road of sin to misery and destruction. I need not cite scriptures to prove this point; our daily observation abundantly confirms it.

II. This difference between men, or this distinction of the righteous from the wicked, is not ascribed in scripture, originally and supremely, "to the will and power of man, as the cause of it, but to the will and power of God, and to his Spirit working in them." I do not deny that the natural powers of man, his understanding, and his will, concur to make this difference; but it is under the original influence and operation of God. 1 Cor. iv. 7. *Who maketh thee to differ? What hast thou that thou hast not received?* When St. Paul had described the gentiles as dead in trespasses and sins; *Eph.* ii. 1. he ranks himself in the third verse among the children of wrath by nature, and as walking in the lust of the flesh and the mind, and confesses himself also to have been dead in sin, verse 4. but we are quickened, saith he, to a life of holiness, by God who is rich in mercy, verses 4, 5. In themselves they were all without strength; *Rom.* v. 6. but they are raised to a spiritual life, by the exceeding greatness of that power which raised Christ Jesus from the dead; *Eph.* i. 19, 20. They were in themselves carnal and sensual, nor could they make themselves spiritual and heavenly; and therefore they must be *born again, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. They must be born of the Spirit;* John. i. 13. and chapter iii. 5, 6. that is, they must have a mighty change pass upon their natures by the operation of the blessed Spirit. In *Eph.* ii. 8, 9. neither faith nor good works are originally of ourselves; *faith is the gift of God, and we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works.* Thus you see this blessed work of conversion, of changing the heart of man, is described in such language as excludes man himself from being its original author: It is regeneration or a new birth, it is a resurrection from the dead, it is a new creation; all proper expressions to shew that the work is divine, and must have God for the author of it.

III. "The distinction that is made by this work of God in the heart of man, is attributed in scripture, not to any merit in man, which God foresaw, but to the free grace of God toward his people, and his special choice or election of them, to be partakers of these blessings." So the words of my text: We are chosen to be made holy, according to the good pleasure of his will. If some among the Jews, who were God's chosen visible church, did believe in Christ, and receive this salvation, they were chosen of God, from among the rest of that nation, to become part of his invisible church by mere grace. When the greatest part of Israel rejected the Messiah, yet there was a remnant of Jews, according to the election of grace, who became christians; and *if it is of grace, then no more of works, otherwise grace would be no more grace;* Rom. xi. 5, 6. Works and merit are inconsistent with an election of grace. If some of the Ephesian gentiles received the gospel, they also were chosen from among the rest that lie *dead in sins,* and were *quickened and saved by the grace of that God, who is rich in mercy, according to*

the great love wherewith he loved them; Eph. ii. 4, 5, 7. 8. And the apostle ascribes his own salvation, as well as that of other sinners; Tit. iii. 5. *not to works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.* This is the fountain of all blessings, whether conferred on Jew, or gentile; Rom. ix. 15. 16. *God has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and compassion on whom he will have compassion.* Time would fail me to shew how full this chapter of St. Paul is of the distinctions, which are made between men by divine grace, even before they had done good or evil, whether it be for a temporal or eternal inheritance, and the one as a type of the other. St. John concurs in the same doctrine. If we love God, the first source of it was his love towards us. 1 John iv. 10, 19. *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us; and if we love him, it is because he loved us first.*

IV. "This choice of persons to sanctification and salvation by the grace of God is represented in scripture, as before the foundation of the world, or from eternity. So my text expressly declares; and indeed it must be so in the nature of things, for whatsoever the power or the mercy of God doth in time, he decreed to do it from eternity. He has no new designs. *Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world;* Acts xv. 18. So 2 Thess. ii. 13. *God hath from the beginning chosen,* or taken, you from amongst the other gentiles, *unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.* And to this he called you by our gospel. There was a book of life written before the foundation of the world; *Rev.* xiii. 18. *All that dwell upon the earth,* that is, all this part of the world to which the prophecy refers, *shall worship the beast,* or follow after antichrist, except those *whose names are written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain;* for that I take to be a much more proper translation of the original. In this book of life were written the names of those persons who should not yield to antichristian idolatry, and should be preserved from the general corruption that came upon the christian world.

Upon the whole it appears from the language of scripture, that those who are sanctified and saved by divine grace, were before chosen of God, to be made holy and happy.

I proceed now to the second general head of my discourse, *viz.* That God from the beginning appointed his Son Jesus Christ to be the medium of exercising all this grace, and gave his chosen people to the care of his Son, to make them partakers of this salvation. This seems to be the meaning of my text.

Are we blessed with all spiritual blessings? It is as the members of one body, in Jesus Christ, as our common head. Are we chosen? It is still in Christ the Son of God. *In all things he must have the pre-eminence: He is the head of the body, the church;* Col. i. 18. He was first chosen by the Father to be the glorious head of a holy and happy number of mankind, and we are chosen in him that we might become his holy and happy members. He is called *the elect of God, in whom his soul delighteth;* Isaiah xlii. 1. *The mighty one on whom God has laid our help, who was exalted and chosen out of the people;* Psalm lxxxix. 19. You may observe he is represented here to be chosen, as a man from among the people of Israel to be their Lord and Saviour; but that he might be equal to this work, and mighty to save, he was *one with God, all the fulness of the godhead dwelt in him bodily;* Col. ii. 9. He is *the Word who was with God, and who was God;* John i. 1. And in due time *this Word was made flesh and dwelt among us;* verse 14. Are we chosen that we might be saved? It is in and through Christ, who was chosen to be our Saviour.

Are we predestinated to the adoption of children? It is still in Christ, who is the

original Son, the *brightness of his Father's glory, the express image of his person, and who was appointed to be heir of all things;* Heb. i. 2, 3. *And we are appointed to be conformable to his image, to be heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, and possessors of the inheritance;* Rom. viii. 17, 29.

Is there a book of life written? It is in the Lamb's book of life: The names of all the chosen sons and daughters of God were written down in this book, but his name stands first there in divine characters, as the first chosen, and the head of all the rest; for before the foundation of the world, God gave the care of all these persons to his best beloved Son.

Hence it is you find our Saviour so often speaking of those who were given him by the Father, out of this world; John xvii. 2. *Thou hast given thy Son power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him;* which the twentieth verse of this chapter teaches us to apply to all who should believe on him, through the word of the apostles, as well as to the apostles themselves. And in verse 24. *All that the Father hath given me, must be with me where I am.* And John vi. 37. *All that the Father hath given me, shall come unto me, that they may have life.* Hence also arise those glorious expressions of St. Paul; 2 Tim. i. 9. *God hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began.* Tit. i. 1, 2. St. Paul speaking of the faith of God's elect, he adds, *in hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie, hath promised before the world began.* Here is grace given to men, before the beginning of the world; but it is given more immediately to Christ their head, in trust for them: Here is a promise of eternal life made before the creation; but it was made to Christ, for them, before they had a being. Examples of this kind are common among men, when one person is made trustee of an estate for many children, or heirs that are yet unborn, and he stands engaged to make them possessors of it in successive seasons.

I have put all these texts together, that we may observe the whole current of scripture running this way, and leading our thoughts to this great doctrine, *viz.* that as God hath chosen his people before the foundation of the world to holiness and salvation, so he has given them for this purpose into the hands of his Son. Nor did the Son of God refuse this glorious trust, but cheerfully undertook the work: So he is represented in the Old Testament; Psalm xl. 7. *Lo, I come in the volume;* or rather the beginning of the book *it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God.* Whether this book be the secret book of life, or the public book of scripture, I will not here determine; both are true. And so it is written also, in the history of the life of Christ; for he speaks often with sacred pleasure, that he came to do his Father's will, and to take care of those whom the Father had given him, to keep them from perishing, and to raise them up at the last-day.

Now this is what our divines generally call the covenant of redemption, even these sacred transactions between God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, *before the foundation of the world;* and I think the scripture calls it the *covenant; Psalm* lxxxix. 28. When the Psalmist has represented Christ, under the character of David, as chosen of God from among the people, to lay our help upon him, he adds, *my covenant shall stand fast with him,* saith the Lord, *his seed will I make to endure for ever;* and though they may sometimes fall into sin, *yet I will not suffer my faithfulness to fail; my covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips, Once have I sworn by my holiness,*

that I will not lie unto David; that is, I will fulfil the promises that I have made to my Son, the true David, the king of Israel, or the head of my chosen people; for I have confirmed this covenant with him by divine solemnities. And I am sure, the five first verses of the seventeenth of John, wherein our Saviour pleads with his Father, carry in them the plain language of a covenant, as every reader may observe.

The only thing which remains on this head, is briefly to run over the articles of this covenant, or the mutual engagements between God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ.

First then, let us consider what it was Christ undertook, as the chosen Saviour of his people. The *only begotten Son of God, who lay in the bosom of his Father, and had glory with him before the world was;* John i. 18. and xvii. 5. agreed to *come forth from the Father, and to come into this world, and to be emptied of that glory for a season;* John xvi. 28. Phil. ii. 7. *to take flesh and blood upon him;* Heb. ii. 14. *to be born of a woman;* Gal. iv. 4. and to be *made in the likeness of sinful flesh;* Rom. viii. 3. and in the fashion of a man, that he might be bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and become a proper head for such members as we are; *Eph.* v. 30. and that he might be our brother and kinsman, who should have a right to redeem our lost inheritance. *He who was in the form of God, consented to take upon him the form of a servant;* Phil. ii. 7. and passed through a life of various labour, reproach, and suffering, as well as performed the duties of the moral and ceremonial law, not only that he might become a pattern to us, of patience and universal holiness, but that he might do all the will of God, and fulfil the righteousness of that law which mankind had broken; *Psalm* xl. 7, 8. He undertook also to become a preacher of righteousness and of grace, and to explain the law of God, and proclaim the gospel of salvation among men; *Psalm* xl. 9. *Isaiah* lxi. 1.

And besides all this, he consented to take upon him the sins of men, that is, by way of imputation, as a sacrifice, to bear our sins in his body, on the cursed tree, to be made a sin-offering for us, and to expose himself to painful sufferings, and a bloody death on that account, that he might make a proper atonement for sin; 2 *Cor.* v. 21. 1 *Pet.* ii. 24. *Heb.* x. 5—12. *Rom.* iii. 25. *The good Shepherd came to lay down his life for his sheep;* John x. 15. And in *John* xiv. 16. when he was about to leave this world, he promised to intercede or pray for them. And when the Father should exalt him to the kingdom, and put all power into his hand, he engaged to call them by his word, to bestow on them repentance, and forgiveness, to send down the sanctifying Spirit upon them, and in general to rescue them from every evil; to bear them through all the difficulties and dangers of life, and to convey them safe to the possession of the appointed inheritance. It would not be possible, in this short discourse, to cite at large all the scriptures that reveal and support these truths. Whatsoever our blessed Saviour performed in the execution of his mediatorial office, we may justly suppose it was an article and agreement in that original covenant made betwixt him and his Father: And in many of the instances which I have mentioned, the scripture expressly teaches us, that he performed them as the appointment of his Father.

In the next place, let us take a brief survey of the articles of this covenant on God the Father's side. Whatsoever powers, or honours, or employments he bestowed on his Son, we have reason to suppose, it was in pursuance of this original covenant of grace and salvation.

First then, we may justly conclude, that God engaged to employ him in the work of

creation, as a foundation of his future kingdom among men; by him God made angels, and they shall be his ministering spirits, for the men who shall be heirs of his salvation; by him God created mankind, and he shall be Lord of them all; by him the blessed God made his own people, and he shall save them. He spread abroad the heavens, and he laid the foundations of this earth; even all the provinces of his future vast dominion, with all their inhabitants, are of his own making; for *without him was nothing made that was made;* John i. 3. and Col. i. 14, 15.

Again, we may suppose it was agreed by the Father, that he should be the king of Israel, which was the visible church of God, as a type of his kingdom, and the government of his invisible church; that he should fix his dwelling in a cloud of glory, *in his holy hill of Sion;* Psalm ii. 6, 7. and should govern the Jewish nation by judges, or priests, or kings, as his deputies, till he himself should appear in the flesh.

God the Father undertook also to furnish him with every thing necessary for his appearance and his ministry here upon earth, to *prepare a body for him;* Heb. x. 5. *to give him the Spirit without measure;* John iii. 34. Isaiah xi. 2. to bear him up through all his sufferings, to accept his sacrifice and atonement for sin, to raise him up from the dead, to exalt him not only to the former glory which he had with him, before the world was, which he asks for as a matter of agreement; *John* xvii. 4, 5, but to honour him at his right-hand with superior powers. He gave him the assurance of a people to obey him, or a seed to serve him; he promised the gentile nations for his inheritance, and to make him the Lord of all things in heaven and earth, that he might govern all for the good of his church. He gave him also the *promise of the Holy Spirit;* Luke xxiv. 49. that he might send him down in a variety of gifts and graces upon his apostles at first, to begin his gospel-church on earth, and upon all his chosen people for their sanctification through all ages, to the end of the world. He appointed him of old to be the judge of men and angels; and all this authority and glory was promised him in that early covenant, partly as a proper recompence for his sufferings, and partly as a means to enable him to fulfil all the articles of his engagement to God, his Father. *Father,* said he, *glorify thy Son, for he hath finished the work thou gavest him to do on earth; and thou hast given him,* that is, promised to give him, *power over all flesh, that he may give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him;* John xvii. 1—4.

These things are recorded in a variety of scriptures, which it would be too large at present to rehearse. A glorious covenant! with sacred and divine engagements, which are fulfilled on both sides, with perfect honour and faithfulness! What an effectual security is derived hence, for the salvation of all that believe in Christ! What an assurance is hereby given, that none of his chosen ones should perish! What matter of delightful meditation, of holy wonder, and devout thankfulness, may the saints of God derive from this blessed covenant, which reaches beyond the limits of this world and time, and extends from one eternity to another! In condescension to our understandings, the holy prophets compare the firmness of this covenant to the ordinances of heaven, to the foundations of the earth, to the certain periods of the moon, and the established course of nature: But by the light of the New Testament, we may venture boldly to rise higher, and say, that when these heavens shall be folded up as a curtain, when the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon be deprived of her light, when the foundations of the earth shall totter, and all things in it be burned up, this

covenant shall remain in its full force, shall bring everlasting honours to God the Father, and his Son Jesus, and for ever establish all the children of God in holiness and joy.

There are yet four things that remain to be done, with relation to this great doctrine of the election of sinners in Christ to be made holy and happy. There are some difficulties attend the belief of it, which ought to be relieved. There are some proper uses to which this doctrine should be applied. There are some practical abuses of it, against which we must set a guard; and there are some remarks or inferences which may be formed upon the whole discourse.

First, As for the difficulties which attend it, and the many cavils and objections which are raised against it, I shall not interrupt this half hour with controversy, so far as to take notice of any of them in the body of my discourse.* I proceed therefore imme-

* There is one objection of the greatest importance and weight, and therefore I would say something to relieve it in the margin.

Some persons have argued thus; If God has chosen a certain number to be made holy and happy by Jesus Christ, the Mediator, while others are left out of this choice, and go on in sin to their final destruction, will they not justly complain of God, at the last day, as having laid a bar against their salvation, by not choosing them? Will they not say, there was no Mediator to undertake their cause, no pardon, no salvation provided for them; and therefore the offers of pardon and salvation, which are made to them in common with other sinners in the gospel, are mere delusive words, and have no truth in them? But far be this imputation from the God of grace and truth!

Answer I. The offers of salvation by a Mediator are made in general terms to all sinners wheresoever the gospel is preached, and every one that applies himself to Christ in the appointed way, and is sincerely willing to receive this salvation, shall have it bestowed upon him. John iii. 16. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but should have everlasting life.* So far was our blessed Lord appointed the common Mediator of mankind, that none shall be able to complain in the day of judgment, that they perish for want of a Mediator. *This is the will of God who sent him*, or the grand commission with which he came into the world, not only that he should take care of those whom the Father had given him, but it runs in general, that he should receive all that come to him, and *he will by no means cast them out.* See John vii. 37—40. None shall complain, that their sins are unpardoned for want of a sufficiency in the merit or atonement of Christ. And though it is confessed, that his blood and life were paid down as a price for the certain redemption and salvation of all that the Father had given him, yet the blood of him who was *God manifest in the flesh*, had a sufficient value in it to procure pardon, heaven and happiness, for a whole world of sinful men: And the reason why unbelievers and impenitent sinners are condemned is, because they did not apply themselves sincerely to this Mediator, they did not choose to lay hold of this salvation, which consists in a likeness to God, as well as in his favour, in holiness as well as happiness.

II. Nor shall any be able to say at that day, that they missed of the salvation of Christ, for want of sufficient natural powers to lay hold of it, and receive it. Sinners who hear the gospel have a natural understanding to take in the meaning of the word preached; they have also a will to accept or refuse the proposals of grace, to receive or reject this all-sufficient Saviour: But there is an aversion in them to attend to and obey the gospel, through the corruptions of their nature by original sin; their minds will not learn divine things, because they shut their eyes; their wills refuse to receive the grace of the gospel, they shut it out of their hearts; they have a delight in sin, a dislike of Christ, and of his salvation, which consists in holiness, and the love of God; they have a rooted obstinacy of will against the methods of divine mercy. *This is their condemnation;* John iii. 19. *that light came into the world, and they loved darkness rather than light;* and therefore they must die in their sins, because *they would not come unto Christ, that they might have life;* John v. 40.

I confess this aversion, this obstinacy of mind and will against the gospel, may be called natural, or rather native, as it comes to us by nature in its present corrupted state; and in scripture it is sometimes represented as impotence or inability to repent, to return to God, to receive Christ and his grace. John vi. 65. *No man can come to me, except it were given him of my Father.* And it is termed blindness of mind and hardness of heart, and a death in sin; not that there is really such a natural incapacity in their mind and will to receive this grace, as there is in a blind or dead carcase; but it is a moral impotency, as it is well expressed by our divines, because the aversion is so strong and so rooted in their hearts, that they will never renounce sin, and receive the salvation of Christ, without the powerful influences of divine grace.

And that it is a moral impotence, and not properly natural, appears by the moral remedies applied to cure it, *viz.* commands, promises, threatenings, &c. which it would be useless and ridiculous to apply to natural impotence, that is, to make the blind see, or the dead arise.

Both the first and second answer to this objection, may be represented by a very fair similitude. Suppose God

diately to the second thing I proposed, which was to shew what are the proper uses of this doctrine of God's election of sinners to salvation, and giving them into the hands of his Son. This great truth is not designed to be matter of mere speculation, and much less to be tossed and bandied about in noisy quarrels and controversies among the disciples of Christ, but it hath its sacred and glorious uses; among which are such as these:

Use I. Since we are chosen to be holy, as well as happy, we may search and find out our election by our sanctification, and make it sure and evident. So the apostle Peter advises; 2 Pet. i. 10. *Give diligence to make your calling and election sure;* that is, to make your election sure by your calling, by your obedience to the heavenly call. And St. Paul infers, that the Thessalonians were *elect of God, because the gospel came to them, not in word only, but in power, and they became followers of him, and of Christ;* 1 Thess. i. 4—6. Have you chosen God for your portion and happiness, as he reveals himself by Christ Jesus in the gospel? Then his word will assure you God has chosen you in Christ. Have you given up your souls to the hands of Jesus, the Saviour, without reserve, that you may be made holy and happy? Then you may infer with assurance, that God has given you also into the hands of Christ for this blessed purpose. Have you the characters of the children of God upon you, and are you made like to his first beloved Son? You may assure yourselves then, that you were predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ. O divine science! O blessed skill of searching into the secret of the decrees of God, and of finding that our names are written in the book of life!

II. Let those who by a sincere search have found the blessed marks and evidences of their election in Christ Jesus, take the comfort of it, rejoice in it, live upon it, and

has decreed, that he will make the rising sunbeams shine so effectually on a thousand certain persons, that they shall be roused thereby to their morning work, and enjoy the pleasure of it: May we not say, the sun has beams sufficient to enlighten the whole nation, and they have all a natural power to behold and enjoy this light; though perhaps only that thousand will see the sun rising, because their sloth confines the rest to their beds, they have an aversion to the early business of the morning? and this lazy humour hangs so heavy upon them, that they cry, they cannot rise. Thus, though the Sun of Righteousness has light and grace enough in him to save all mankind, yet their own sloth and obstinacy, and evil inclinations, exclude them from this salvation. Both these events arise without a just complaint against the God of nature, who called up the morning sun to enlighten the nations, or against the God of grace, who sent forth the Sun of Righteousness, to bless the dark and sinful world.

III. No condemned sinner shall have reason to say, that there was any bar or hinderance laid in the way of his salvation, by this decree of God, or by his choosing some sinners, and giving them to Christ; for though he provided effectual grace for those whom he chose to certain salvation, yet he only left others to their own natural state, as corrupted by the fall of Adam; he left them to the wilful blindness of their own minds, and the wilful hardness of their own hearts. While this original counsel of God, this decree of election provides and secures grace and glory to some, it does not in the least hinder others from receiving and obeying the gospel.

IV. None shall be condemned at last, because they were not chosen in Christ, but because they were impenitent sinners, who in some measure have resisted the light of their own consciences, under whatsoever dispensation they have lived, whether under the law of nature, the law of Moses, or the gospel of Christ. These consciences of theirs shall lay them under a dreadful and unanswerable conviction of their own guilt, shall give sentence against them, and confirm the condemning sentence of Jesus, the Judge of all.

There are other difficulties which are started against this doctrine, which might perhaps be as easily answered, if time would allow. But if all our reasoning powers should fail us in the vindication of this sovereignty of God, in choosing particular persons to be the objects of any of his favours, whether earthly or heavenly; yet St. Paul teaches us to answer; Rom. ix. 11—24. *O man! who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and that not among the Jews only, but also among the gentiles. Nor is there any unrighteousness with God, in any of these transactions; and the purpose of God according to election must stand.* And we may remark by the way, that such a sort of answer as this makes it pretty evident, that our doctrine is the same with that of St. Paul; for if persons were chosen of God on the account of foreseen good works, there would have been no room for such an objection, and such an answer.

walk worthy of so divine a privilege. See that you keep your evidences of grace ever clear and bright by holy watchfulness, that ye may have a strong defence in every hour of temptation. "Shall I who am *chosen out of the world* that I may be holy, shall I mingle myself with sinful men, and indulge iniquity? Shall I who am adopted into God's family, live like one of the children of Satan?" This is a sweet refuge also for us to have recourse to in every outward distress: "Shall I faint and be overwhelmed under a present sorrow, who have the holy evidences of election upon me, who am chosen and prepared of God for everlasting happiness?" Let us walk in this daily practice, in this joy of the Holy Spirit, and wait for a rich and abundant entrance into the kingdom and glory of our Lord and Saviour.

The third thing I proposed to mention was, the abuses of this awful doctrine. There is nothing so true, so sacred and so divine, but it may be abused through the wickedness, or the weakness of the hearts of men, and the temptations of the evil-one.

Abuse I. One abuse of this doctrine is, when we pervert it to nourish presumption, and to indulge our sloth and negligence, when we sit with folded hands like the sluggard in the neglect of duty, or allow ourselves in a course of sin, upon this pretence, "That if I am elected I shall be called, and sanctified, and saved; the grace of God will take hold of me some time or other, and bring me to faith, and holiness, and eternal life."

Answer I. Do you dare venture to argue thus foolishly in the common affairs of this life, or to act under the influence of such arguments? You believe that God has determined the time of your continuance in this world, and do you live idle, and refuse to procure food, or to partake of it, on this pretence, that God will prolong your life to his appointed hour, and that he will provide food for you, and make you eat and drink, if he design you shall live? No: You apply yourselves with diligence to obtain your daily bread, and to partake of it; you take care to make use of the appointed means to preserve natural life, notwithstanding God's decree: And why do you not practise the same with regard to your salvation, and seek after faith and holiness as the appointed means? But it is a sign you value eternal life at a very low rate, if you will venture the loss of it upon such a weak pretence, as you dare not trust to in the things of this life. That man that goes down to the grave, or goes down to hell upon these principles, perishes like a fool, and deserves to perish.

II. Electing grace, as it works in calling and converting us to faith and holiness, generally operates in so gentle, so imperceptible a manner, and so suitable to our natural faculties, by awakening them to seek after heaven, that we can hardly distinguish it from the operation of our own spirits, but by the blessed effects of it; and if we will never stir up ourselves and our natural powers to seek after the salvation of Christ, it is a dangerous sign that we are not elected. For though divine grace be really the first agent in our salvation, yet it never doth violence to our natural powers, nor will it ever save us without our own activity and diligence in duty.

Abuse II. Another abuse of this doctrine is, when persons indulge despairing thoughts under this pretence: "If I am never so watchful, never so diligent, I cannot be saved, unless I am elected; and therefore it is in vain for me to seek after salvation; for the scripture tells me, Rom. ix. 16. *It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.*"

Answer. But remember also, O tempted and despairing soul! that there was never any one who had a will to obey the gospel, and who did run the christian race, but that

he obtained the blessed prize of salvation. It is granted, indeed, that the Holy Spirit is the first, but secret, agent in this important affair: Pray earnestly then for the Holy Spirit, and set thyself in a course of duty, according to the appointment of Christ in his gospel, and thou hast many promises to support thy hope, that such prayers shall be answered. Luke xi. 13. *Your heavenly Father will give his Holy Spirit to them who ask him.* Thy first business is not to enquire after thy election, which is a secret thing, but hearken to the public call of the gospel, repent of every sin, and receive the grace that is there offered; and when thou art become a lover of God, and a believer in Christ, thou mayest then trace up these graces to their original spring, even to thy election in Christ Jesus, *before the foundation of the world.*

The last thing I proposed is, to make some few remarks on this subject.

Remark I. I infer, that there are some doctrines wherein the reason of man finds many difficulties, and which the folly of man would abuse to unhappy purposes, which yet are plain and express truths asserted in the word of God. Among these, we place the great doctrine of the election of sinners in Christ to be made holy and happy. We intreat our brethren who differ from us in this point, to be so candid as to suppose, that we feel the difficulties as well as they, and we see the awful consequences which seem to affright them from receiving it; we have had our doubts about it, and found our reasoning powers a little perplexed and unwilling to receive it, lest God should be represented as partial in his favours, and lest man should cavil against his proceedings: But we feel ourselves overpowered with evidence and conviction, when we see the doctrine so plainly and frequently asserted in scripture, that we cannot resist the light and force of it: The express words of God demand our submission and constrain our belief, and we are persuaded our brethren would believe it too, if they saw it in the same light.

We are sensible also of the abuses of this doctrine, and the sinful purposes to which it is sometimes perverted; yet since it is a truth God has seen fit to reveal in several parts of his word, and since it has some valuable purposes and uses in the christian life, we cannot but think it proper sometimes to mention it on special occasions, as part of the counsel of God toward our salvation.

II. However this doctrine may be opposed by the reasonings of men, and even ridiculed by a bold jest, yet if it then appear to be a divine truth, as the scriptures now seem to teach us, the blessed God will not be ashamed of it in the last great day; then shall he unfold all the scheme of his original counsels, and spread abroad his transactions toward mankind, before the face of all his intelligent creatures. Rev. xx. 12. *When the judgment shall be set, and the books shall be opened,* that is, the book of divine laws, and the several dispensations of grace, as well as the book of divine records, wherein the lives and actions of men were written down, there shall also another book be opened, even the book of life: And as those former books compared together, *viz.* the records of the behaviour of men, whether good or evil, compared with the laws and dispensations of God, shall shew the equity of the great Judge in his rewards and punishments; so *the Lamb's book of life,* wherein the names of his people were written down as elected in Christ, before the world began, shall discover the blessed correspondence between the final sentence of happiness pronounced on holy believers, and the original grace of God which chose them in Christ Jesus unto faith and holiness, and secured this happiness for them. A glorious harmony of divine wisdom, grace, and providence!

I cannot think, that any of the cavils of wit against this doctrine will stand before the

light of the great tribunal. Banter and ridicule of electing love, and of the names written in the book of life, however they may be applauded in a degenerate age, will meet with no applause before that tremendous appearance. Every mouth shall be stopped, the righteousness of God shall be cleared from every imputation, the grace of God shall be glorified in all his chosen ones in that day, and Christ shall be admired in all his saints. But this leads me to the third remark:

III. The whole chain and current of our salvation, from the beginning to the end, arises and proceeds all the way from the free grace of God, through the mediation of his Son Jesus Christ. God and his Son must have the glory, and pride must be hid from man for ever. Are we chosen, are we called, are we justified and sanctified, and at last advanced to heaven? It is all by the mercy of the Father, by the mediation of the Son, by the power and the grace of God, and his Spirit, exerting themselves in all the stages of our salvation, before time began, and when time shall be no more. Grace and Christ run through all, and reign and triumph through the whole scheme of our happiness, from the very foundation of it: And when the topstone of this blessed building shall be laid in heaven, the inhabitants of that world shall join all their voices, and shout together, to the honour of Christ and grace. And that I may conclude this awful subject with the language of sincere charity, I am persuaded there will be found many holy souls there, whose voices shall join in this triumph, and this song of glory to electing love, who had not learned this doctrine till they came to heaven, nor knew the eternal spring of their own salvation, till they were made possessors of the blessing.—*Amen.*

SERMON XLVII.

THE EXCELLENCY AND ADVANTAGES OF THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION, WITH THE INVITATIONS AND PROMISES OF THE GOSPEL.

HEB. viii. 6.

HE IS THE MEDIATOR OF A BETTER COVENANT, WHICH WAS ESTABLISHED UPON BETTER PROMISES.

THIS better covenant, which the apostle here commends, is the christian religion, or the dispensation of the gospel under Jesus Christ, the Messiah, and the Mediator. Now, in order to shew the superior excellency of the christian dispensation, it is necessary to take a brief review of all those former dispensations of grace, which are more largely explained in the foregoing sermon.*

The first is that of Adam. No sooner was man fallen from his state of innocency, and had lost all reasonable hopes of happiness, according to that constitution and covenant in paradise which our divines have generally called the covenant of works, but the goodness of God was manifested in revealing to Adam the covenant or constitution of grace, as it was contained in this obscure promise, the *seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent;* Gen. iii. 15. which in the language of the New Testament, signifies that the Saviour, *in the fulness of time, should be born of a woman, and should destroy this work of the devil.* Gal. iv. 5. 1 John iii. 8. This first promise, doubtless was more largely explained to our first parents, which encouraged sinful mankind, by the hopes of a Saviour, and of acceptance with God, to repent of their transgressions, and return to their Maker in a way of new obedience. This is that gospel which is the same in all ages, and which runs through all the Bible; *viz.* that there is forgiveness for sinful men who return to God, and this is to be manifested through a Saviour. But in the several discoveries of this gospel to men, there were several additional duties or promises, or both, which distinguish them into what we call different dispensations.

This constitution or covenant of grace, in its dispensation to Adam, had the appointment of sacrifices superadded, which were figures of Christ, the true sacrifice of atonement. This covenant was also confirmed to Noah and his sons after the flood, with some further precepts about the distinctions of meats, and the punishment of murder, and the promise that the earth should be no more destroyed by water, of which the rainbow was an appointed seal. This is that dispensation by which Job and Melchisedec also were saved, with many others in that early age of the world.

The same covenant was continued to Abraham, with some clearer promises of the Messiah, or Saviour. *The gospel was preached to Abraham;* Gal. iii. 8. together with the addition of a promised inheritance in the land of Canaan, as a type of heaven, and

* See sermons at Berry Street, sermon xii. " the various Dispensations of the Gospel," &c.

the peculiar precept of circumcision, which was a figure of the mortification of sin. This is called the dispensation of Abraham.

The same gracious covenant or gospel was yet farther revealed to Moses, and by him to the nation of Israel, in the wilderness of Sinai. This was called the Levitical or Mosaical, or the Jewish dispensation. Heb. iv. 2. *The gospel was preached to them as well as unto us.* And here the law and will of God were more explicitly set before them, and their encouragements to repentance, and hope in divine mercy for eternal life grew greater, by the many discoveries of grace they enjoyed, and by the dwelling of God among them upon the mercy-seat. Here also there were a multitude of emblems or signs and pledges, both of the blessings of God and the duties of man, which are usually called the Jewish ceremonies.

But it must be observed, that in this dispensation of Moses, there were very many precepts and promises of a carnal and temporal kind superadded to the gospel of grace, which precepts and promises, together with the ten commands considered apart from the gospel, made up that Sinai-covenant, which was really a covenant of works; it was made between God, as the political head or king of that people; and the Jews, as his subjects; and it was by the observance of this outward covenant the Jews were to enjoy the land of Canaan, and temporal blessings therein.

Let it be well considered, that this Sinai-covenant which is often called the law in scripture, and which in this chapter is called the first covenant, was a distinct thing from the covenant of grace, or that gospel, which secretly ran through all the dispensations, and which was included in this dispensation also; that gospel which in some clear expressions, and many types and dark hints, was *witnessed by the law and the prophets;* Rom. iii. 21. and by which both Abraham and David, and the pious Jews, were pardoned and saved, as St. Paul proves in *Rom.* iv. 10—25. The great apostle in his Epistles to the *Romans*, and *Galatians*, and *Hebrews*, is often teaching them, that this Sinai-covenant, this law of Moses, with all the ceremonies of it, could not give them life; *Gal.* iii. 21. that is, pardon of sin, and eternal salvation, when it is considered as a distinct thing from the constitution or covenant of grace, which was shadowed out by it: And it is in this sense chiefly the apostle, in the verses following my text, tells them, "The first covenant was not faultless, that is, was not sufficient to save sinful men, or make them holy and happy; and therefore he often warns them against trusting in it for salvation, and assures them, that it waxed old in his day, and was vanishing away, *verses* 7, and 13. and that a new covenant is now introduced, that is, the christian dispensation, or the gospel itself, in the most spiritual manifestation of it. Now as Moses was the Mediator of this covenant of Sinai, and Aaron the priest obtained the ministry thereof, as in the foregoing chapters, so in my text the Son of God, being manifest in the flesh, is that High-priest who *hath obtained a more excellent ministry than Aaron, and is the Mediator of this covenant, which is better than that of Moses, and which is established upon better promises.*

Here let it be observed also, that this christian dispensation of the covenant of grace, which is called the second or new covenant, is not only better than the mere outward covenant of Sinai, or Jewish law of works, by the observance whereof the Jews were to obtain temporal blessings; but it is better than the whole dispensation of Moses, even as including in it the spiritual constitution or covenant of grace; it is better than all the

former dispensations of this covenant of grace that God ever gave to men; and that will appear in the following particulars:

I. "The christian dispensation, or the New Testament, though it be a rich discovery of grace, yet it contains the fairest and fullest representation of the moral law. That law which is of eternal obligation upon all mankind, is more particularly explained here, than in any of the former dispensations." The beauties of holiness which run through this law, shine with a fairer light under the gospel of Christ. The duties of worship, obedience and submission, which we owe to God; the duties of justice, truth, and love, which we owe to our neighbour; and the duty of sobriety and temperance, which we owe to ourselves, are set forth more at large in the New Testament by the apostles; Jesus Christ having begun this work, in his excellent sermon on the mount, in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of Matthew. Here the commands of the law of God are represented in their full extent, as they require the obedience of the heart as well as of the life, as they relate to our inward thoughts and affections, as well as outward actions. As for the doctrine and duty of christian love, forbearance, and forgiveness of enemies, and a readiness to return good for evil, it is either raised to higher degrees than before, or at least it is explained in a more spiritual and sublimer sense than the Jews were ever acquainted with, and enforced by superior motives, and through the aids of divine grace thousands of christians have lived honourably in the practice of it.

II. "In the christian dispensation, the gospel or covenant of grace is revealed more perfectly and plainly than ever before; not in obscure expressions, in types and carnal metaphors, but in its own proper form and language, that is, as a covenant relating to *things spiritual and eternal.*" Every covenant between God and man, in the most complete sense of the word, implies some engagements on our side, which are appointed duties, and some engagements on God's side, which are promised blessings. Now in both these respects, the covenant of grace is revealed in the New Testament in a much more plain and express manner than in former dispensations. The blessings of the covenant of grace, are regeneration or a change of heart, pardon of sin, justification, and acceptance with God, adoption into his family, whereby we are made his children, sanctification of our natures, or being renewed after the image of God, assistance to perform duties, and support under troubles, comfort in life and death, and everlasting joy in another world, in the presence of God and our blessed Saviour. These are most plainly described in the New Testament. The duties of this covenant are faith or trust in a Messiah, who is much better known now having actually appeared in the flesh, unfeigned repentance toward God, confession of sin, converse with God in secret prayer, love to God as a Father, delight in him, joyful hope in his promised mercy, zeal for his honour, and sincere obedience arising from a principle of faith and love. All these are more expressly required in our gospel.

I grant that the chief of these things were contained also in the former dispensations, particularly the Jewish; but many of them were there veiled under types and figures, and dark shadows; so that the Jews were ready to take up with these shadows, instead of the substance. And besides, these spiritual promises and precepts of the gospel were then mixed with so many carnal commandments, and temporal promises of the Sinai-covenant, that the Jews knew not well how to distinguish them: They were too often ready to neglect the inward and spiritual constitution or covenant of grace, that ran through all the dispensations of God, as well as the more spiritual duties of the moral

law; they were ever mistaking their covenant of Sinai, which consisted of so many political and ceremonial, as well as moral precepts and temporal promises, for the very covenant of grace and salvation itself: And accordingly, by an outward observance of these precepts, they hoped for the pardon of all their sins, and eternal life. This was the mistake into which they were always running, and which kept them from receiving the gospel of Christ.

But now the christian dispensation sets the covenant of grace and salvation before us, in its own spiritual language, in a clear and distinct light, and without a veil; so that we plainly behold the free and rich grace of God in this covenant, how it has wrought in every age, towards the recovery of mankind from the ruins of our fall, how it proceeds from step to step in its own glorious way, how it works to restore us to the favour of God and his image, and becomes more abundantly effectual to turn the hearts of sinful men to God, and bring them to blessedness. The vision of grace and glory in the New Testament is written so plain, that he that runs may read it; the high way of repentance, faith and holiness, which leads to eternal life, is laid so open that *the stranger and wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein*, as the prophet Isaiah hath foretold; *Isaiah* xxxv. 8. And it may be observed, that when the ancient prophets speak of these evangelical duties and blessings in the clearest language, it is generally in some prediction of the christian age, and the happiness of this last dispensation.

III. "The rites and ceremonies which are superadded to the covenant of grace, in the christian dispensation of it, are much preferable to those in former times, and that in three respects; they are fewer, they are clearer, and they are much more easy."

They are much fewer than the ceremonies of the Jewish state. What a multitude of ceremonies were they incumbered with! What a numerous train of actions and abstinences are required in the law of Moses! What washings and sprinklings, what numerous purifications by water and blood, what continual danger of new defilements at home and abroad, by night and by day, so that man, woman and child were forced to be upon a perpetual watch lest they should be polluted in their food, in their raiment, in their habitation, or in the common actions of life! And what innumerable ceremonies of worship belonged to the service of the tabernacle and temple! What frequent journies from one end of the land to the other, and multiplied forms of religion at the tabernacle? Whereas in the christian state there are but two ceremonies appointed, *viz.* that of baptism and the Lord's supper. There is no danger that the spiritual part of it should be overwhelmed, buried and lost in the multitude of rites and carnal ordinances, which was often the case under the Jewish state. Again,

These ordinances of the New Testament are much more easy, and less burthensome and expensive than those of the former dispensations. To wash with water, to break a little bread, to pour out a little wine, and to eat or drink in a small quantity, are no such yokes of bondage as those who went before us in every age have sustained. As for the Mosaic rites, they were exceeding expensive and burthensome indeed, beyond all our present power of description; and even the dispensations of Adam and Noah, with their continual sacrifices, and the rite of circumcision, which was added in Abraham's days, had something in them much more costly, bloody, and painful than these two easy ceremonies of the New Testament.

And as the ceremonies of christianity are fewer and easier, so they are much clearer

in their design and manner of representation, than most of the rites annexed to the former dispensations: They have a more natural and direct tendency to explain and illustrate the covenant of grace, and to assist the observance of it. When the body is washed with water in baptism, it very clearly represents, that our souls must pass through the laver of regeneration, or that we must have the Spirit of God shed down upon us, to cleanse us from our defilements. The bread broken, and the wine poured out in the Lord's supper, distinctly represent the body of Christ broken on the cross for our sins, and his blood poured out as an atoning sacrifice; and the actions of eating and drinking do as evidently hold forth our partaking of the blessings purchased by the blood and death of the Son of God. This rite also solemnizes and confirms the covenant of grace, which God hath made with us through his Son Jesus Christ, by our hearty consent thereto, which is expressed by eating and drinking in his presence, and at his table.

IV. "The Son of God, who was the real Mediator of the covenant of grace, through all former dispensations, has condescended to become the visible Mediator of this dispensation." So saith my text, *he is the Mediator of this better covenant.* He began his office of mediation between God and man indeed in those early counsels and transactions with God the Father, before the world was made, which are called the covenant of redemption, and of which you have heard in a former discourse: He appeared in the Old Testament in the form of God; and though he was sometimes called the angel of the Lord, and the angel of his presence, yet he often appeared as God himself, as Jehovah dwelling in a cloud of glory, in light or flame: And as he was one with the Father, so in his visible appearances he represented God, even the Father, both to the patriarchs and to the Jews, in his grandeur and majesty, as well as his mercy. But in this last dispensation, he appears visibly and plainly as the one Mediator between God and man, when he discovers himself as *the Son of God*, and as *the man Christ Jesus;* John iii. 16. And so St. Paul more expressly speaks in 1 *Tim.* ii. 5. The Lord Jesus in the course of his ministry, and especially at the end of it, gave some notices that he was our Mediator with God, and that he came to give his life as a ransom for sinners, and to make peace with his blood: Before he died and rose again, and ascended, he gave us a pattern of his pleading with the Father, in the seventeenth chapter of the gospel of John; and he appears now as St. Paul represents him, as our Mediator and Intercessor in his human nature, before the throne of God. Moses the Mediator of the Jewish covenant, with all his virtues and graces, with all the sacred intimacy to which God admitted him, and with all the shining honours with which God invested and surrounded him, was not comparable to the Mediator of the new covenant, the Son of God himself, *the brightness of his Father's glory, the express image of his person, who lay in the bosom of the Father before the foundation of the world,* but seventeen hundred years ago, *was made flesh and dwelt among us;* John i. 14, 18.

And let it be further observed here, that every thing which we have to do with God by a Mediator, is much more clearly and expressly set before us in the New Testament, than in all former dispensations. Though Jesus was always the Mediator of the covenant of grace, yet the ancients knew so little of him under this express character, that you find neither Abraham, nor David, nor Isaiah, nor those which were most enlightened in divine things, make much use of his name in their addresses to the Father, nor make plain mention of drawing near to God by a Mediator. But if we

christians call upon God, and draw near to him, we have the prevailing name of Christ, given us to plead at the throne; if we apply to the mercy of God, it is by Jesus Christ, the great Reconciler; if we offer our sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving to the Father, they will be well received through Christ, his first beloved Son. We must do all and every thing in the christian life through Jesus Christ, and there we are secure of finding acceptance with God; Col. iii. 17. *Whatever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*

V. "This dispensation of the gospel is not confined to one family or to one nation, or to a few ages of men, but it spreads through all the nations of the earth, and reaches to the end of time." That of Moses was confined to one nation only; that of Abraham to one family, and chiefly limited to his son Isaac. The dispensations of Adam and Noah are more general indeed, and may be represented as given to all mankind; because these were the two great fathers of all, one before the flood, and the other after it: But then each of these revelations was left to the care of one family to publish it to all mankind, who were to be their posterity. But the christian dispensation is and shall be conveyed through the world, to all the heathen nations, as well as to the Jews, and that by a multitude of messengers, by apostles, and evangelists, prophets and teachers, endowed with the gifts and powers of the Blessed Spirit, and sent forth for this purpose. And it has been preserved and conveyed even to our nation, and to our day, by the writings of the apostles, and the ministrations of the preachers of the gospel through every age, and it spreads the rich grace of God, and the salvation of Christ, to the very ends of the earth; nor shall any other dispensation succeed it. Other religions of God's own appointment are worn out, and vanished away, but this being once introduced, must abide for ever.

VI. I might add here some other characters of the christian dispensation, which the apostle gives it in 2 *Cor.* iii. 6—18. whereby he exalts it above all the religion of the Jews, and especially far above the Sinai-covenant. *That was*, saith he, *the ministration of the letter*, a dispensation which consisted much in outward forms and figures, and types: This is *the ministration of the Spirit*, that is, either of the substance and the thing signified in these types, or wherein the Spirit of grace is more eminently poured out on mankind, for conversion and salvation: Either of these senses may give it this name. That *was written only in tables of stone:* This *in fleshly tables of the heart, by the Spirit of the living God.* That was a ministration of terror and condemnation and death, in outward terrible appearances of God on Sinai, and it kept the people under a spirit of bondage and fear: This is the ministration of righteousness and life, inasmuch as all the springs of pardon and life, hope and happiness, are set open in the gospel of Christ. But I proceed to the

VII. and last particular. "The encouragements and persuasive helps which christianity gives us to fulfil the duties of the covenant, are much superior to those which were enjoyed under any of the former dispensations." Now these consist chiefly in examples and motives.

Do examples invite us to our duty, and by a soft and secret influence encourage and lead us on to the performance of it? Such indeed were the names of Abraham and David, each in their day a happy pattern to their several ages: But in my opinion all the praises which are due to David, and Abraham, fall far short of the labours and sufferings, the zeal and patience, the holiness and the love of that divine man, St. Paul,

whose life is recommended as an example to the christian world: And neither David nor Abraham, nor any of the ancient saints, who had each of them their blemishes, are to be compared with the more excellent and perfect pattern of Jesus the Son of God, who was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners; who was without the least blemish in heart and life: He hath given us a glorious example of piety, virtue, and goodness, incomparably superior to all former ages; it is most inviting indeed, and yet inimitable by all that follow.

Let us next consider our various motives to duty under the New Testament.

Are the motives of love and gratitude powerful principles to encourage and persuade us to every active service? Such indeed were the blessings and gifts which God bestowed on men under former dispensations. But what were all those gifts and blessings in comparison of the unspeakable gift of his own Son, to die as a sacrifice in our stead, which is one of the chief themes and glories of the christian revelation? The love of God to us, made visible in the sufferings of the Son of God for our sins, carries with it a more abundant force of persuasion to work upon our gratitude and our love, than all the discoveries of grace from the days of Adam till this day. How can we sin against such astonishing goodness? Against such a sublime instance of divine compassion?

Are the promises and threatenings of God another set of motives to duty? Do the awful glories and terrors of a future and eternal world work upon all the springs of our activity and diligence, by hope and fear? Yes certainly, in a high degree. But the former dispensations had but few of these eternal terrors and glories, these threatenings and promises relating to an invisible state. All beyond death and the grave had a gloom and darkness upon it in former times, except here and there a glimpse of light that was shot in between the clouds. A few bright sentences collected from David, Isaiah, and Daniel, were some of the chief discoveries that we know of in those ancient ages; but in the New Testament the gates of the other world are thrown open; a heaven of happiness, and a hell of misery are discovered there, and set before us in a divine light. The blessedness of departed saints, who see the face of God, and the agonies and outcries of the sinner, who lifts up his eyes in the place of torment, are revealed to us and described in the speeches of Christ, and the writings of his apostles. The awful and glorious scene of the day of judgment is spread out at large in the christian dispensation, together with the decision of the eternal states of the righteous and the wicked according to their works, when everlasting joy, or everlasting sorrow shall be the portion of every son and daughter of Adam. If hope and fear have any power in mankind, to awaken them to an abhorrence of sin, and the practice of holiness, surely these motives of the New Testament, which have so transcendent an influence on our hope and fear, are of the most effectual and constraining kind.

But this leads me to the second part of my text, which corresponds with the appointed theme of my discourse; and that is, "The excellency of the promises of the new covenant," as St. Paul tells us, this new covenant is established, appointed or constituted, upon a set of *better promises*.

The promises of the New Testament will appear to be much superior to those of the Old, if we consider what was hinted before, that they contain in them such blessings as were scarce known under the former dispensations, or at least were so expressed, that it was hard to read them: But in the gospel these future scenes of solemn glory are set before our eyes in the clearest language. We hear the voice of the archangel, and the

trump of God; we see the dead arising out from their graves, a glorious army of saints and martyrs springing at once out of the dust, and their bodies all bright and active, vigorous and immortal. We behold Jesus the Saviour and the Judge upon the throne, and his faithful followers at his right-hand, invested with public honours. We hear the happy sentence pronounced upon them, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom.* We behold them, as it were, reigning with Christ, upon his throne, and ascending with their Lord, to dwell for ever in his presence.

Again, the apostle has taught us to look upon all the promises, as sealed to believers by the blood of the Son of God, and secured to christians by the resurrection and exaltation of their Mediator; for the Father hath put all power into his hand, and he has taken possession of the heavenly inheritance in our name; *Because I live, ye shall live also;* John xiv. 19.

Yet farther, the New Testament confirms all the best promises of the Old, and claims them for itself; for they were eminently made with a design for the days of the Messiah, as many of them expressly inform us. New hearts and new spirits, taking away iniquity, and remembering sins no more, writing the law in the heart, and the dwelling of God amongst them, and their assurance of not departing from God, are such promises as the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel more directly pronounced on the subjects of the kingdom of the Messiah. And there is a new light cast upon them in the gospel, which teaches plain christians to make use of them, and apply them to their own consolation and joy. *They were all written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope;* Rom. xv. 4. Thus we christians become much richer in divine promises, than all the ancients, having a common interest in all the most valuable ones of the Old Testament, as well as a peculiar property in those of the New. What an invaluable and everlasting treasure are *these exceeding great and precious promises which God has given us in Christ Jesus! It is by these we are made partakers of the divine nature,* that is, the image of God, and by these we are enabled to *escape the corruption that is come into this degenerate world through lust*; 2 Peter i. 4. It is by these we are quickened when we are slothful, we are supported when we are sinking, we are encouraged to run the race of duty, and to combat with every opposition. It is from these that christians derive courage in their dying moments, and they triumph over death itself, the last enemy, when a promise sets the prize of eternal life, and the crown of glory just before them. *Be thou faithful to the death, and I will give thee a crown of life;* Rev. ii. 10.

And how are all the invitations of grace in the Old Testament animated by the Son of God come in the flesh? How many new ones are superadded? And how much is their force of persuasion encreased, when the power and success of them has appeared in such wonderous instances as the New Testament sets before our eyes? How are the worst of sinners encouraged to lay hold of a promise of mercy, and to rest upon it, when our blessed Saviour received publicans and other notorious criminals, when Levi and Zaccheus were so favoured by him, when Mary Magdalen found pardon for the guilt of a public and shameless life, when Paul the persecutor and blasphemer obtained mercy, and was made a favourite and an apostle, and when he assures us that his conversion was designed to this blessed purpose, as a pattern of abounding grace? 1 *Tim.* i. 16.

How powerfully are humble and despairing christians supported, and backsliders

encouraged to return to God in a way of dutiful obedience, when Peter, who fell in the hour of temptation and denied his Lord, was recovered to repentance by a compassionate look of Christ, and not only received to forgiveness, but advanced to the first rank of office in the kingdom of Christ, and did glorious service for him? But it is time to put an end to this discourse, and it shall be concluded with a few Inferences.

Inference I.—" Though every part of our Bible be sacred and divine, yet the latter part of it is much more valuable to us than the former:" The New Testament far exceeds the Old, because it reveals to us this better covenant, and makes us possessors of these better promises. The books of Moses and the prophets, and the psalms of David, contain admirable discoveries of the majesty and mercy of God, but where the beams of *Jesus the Sun of Righteousness* shine, there is not only a more glorious light to direct our steps, and to enliven our spirits, but there is a new lustre shed abroad over the psalms and the ancient prophets, and the typical ceremonies and promises of Moses. So that in Great Britain and in our age, we understand those ancient divine writings much better than the Israelites in the land of Canaan could understand them, even better than Moses and the prophets understood what they themselves were inspired to write. John the Baptist was greater than all the prophets, because he could point to Jesus the Messiah, *Behold the Lamb of God;* John i. 29, 36. And since the death and resurrection of Christ, and pouring down of the Spirit, the least minister, or perhaps the least member in the kingdom of Christ, knows much more of the Messiah and his kingdom than John did, and than all the former ages, and the writers that lived in them; *Matt.* xi. 11.

II. " What abundant thanks and praises are due to the blessed God, who brought us forth into the world under this last and best dispensation, who hath trained us up in the christian doctrine, and not made us Jews?" We are not called to that troublesome, and expensive kind of worship, which consists in the killing and burning of bulls and goats, and the choicest lambs of the flock. The bleeding flesh of animals, and fire and smoke make no part of our religious solemnities. Jesus the Lamb of God is already offered as an all-sufficient sacrifice; there is no need of another atonement: *He has by one offering for ever perfected them that are sanctified;* Heb. x. 14. We are not obliged to travel three times a year to distant parts of the nation where we dwell, in order to adore our Maker, at one single tabernacle or a temple, for in every place, that God who is a Spirit is worshipped now, even by public assemblies, *in spirit and in truth;* John iv. 23. We are not forced to spell out the mercies of God, by types and dark figures; but we see his overflowing goodness, in the person and offices of his beloved Son Jesus; we read the pardon of our sins in his blood, and our sanctification by his Holy Spirit. There is no such veil spread over the invisible world, as covered the ancient dispensation. Heaven and hell, and all the awful and eternal things that belong to them, are discovered in a clear and surprising light. We are not left to live upon the promises of temporal good things, and to search out the spiritual blessings, that are covered and wrapped up in them; but the spiritual and everlasting mercies which are provided for the saints, stand open to sight, in the promises of the New Testament: They seem to court our embraces, and invite us to rejoice in hope. We need no longer be " subject to a bondage of spirit through fear of death, for death is conquered by the Son of God; *life and immortality are brought to light by his gospel,* and *God hath not given us the spirit of bondage* and terror under the christian dispensation; *but the spirit of courage,*

and faith, and love, and joy unspeakable;" 2 Tim. i. 7—10. For ever blessed be the Lord, who hath called us to be christians.

III. " Do we enjoy the privilege of knowing this better covenant, and shall any of us content ourselves without a certain interest in the blessings of it?" Do we hear of these better promises, and shall we be satisfied without a title to them? Shall we belong to that wretched tribe of *despisers, who behold this great salvation, and wonder, and perish?* Acts xiii. 41. What double anguish will seize our consciences, when the Judge shall pronounce at the last day, *Go ye cursed into endless misery; ye had all the glories and joys of heaven brought nearest of all to you in this better covenant, and offered to you in these better promises, and yet ye refused to accept them?*

IV. " If we christians live under a better covenant, and enjoy better promises, we must needs reproach ourselves if we find our faith and obedience fall below that of the Jews." Have we nobler assistances in our holy race to heaven, and yet shall we move on slower than they, and lag behind them? Have we brighter encouragements, and yet shall our zeal be colder? Are our duties set before us in a far clearer light, and shall our obedience be more defective? Does divine mercy reign in the promises of the gospel with superior glory, and shall our faith in these promises be more feeble and wavering? O let us set the pattern of Abraham and David, and other ancient saints before us, and shame ourselves out of our earthiness of spirit, our lazy humour, our cold affection to divine things, and our languishing hope of immortality. Let the name, and pattern, and Spirit of the blessed Jesus inspire us with new vigour to follow him, who is the Mediator of this new and better covenant, till he shall have brought us to the accomplishment of all these better promises. *Amen.*

SERMON XLVIII.

THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST TO HIS KINGDOM, AND HIS SENDING DOWN THE HOLY SPIRIT.

ACTS ii. 33.

THEREFORE BEING BY THE RIGHT-HAND OF GOD EXALTED, AND HAVING RECEIVED OF THE FATHER THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY GHOST, HE HATH SHED FORTH THIS, WHICH YE NOW SEE AND HEAR.

IT was a strange amazement that seized the hearts of the multitude who came up to Jerusalem at the days of Pentecost, when they heard the apostle speak so many new languages: The Jews and the gentiles of various nations were struck with one general surprise, when they found fishermen, and persons of no learning, declare in every tongue the wonderful works of God and his grace: And while they were busy in their enquiries into the cause of this great event, Peter standing up with the eleven, lift up his voice as their speaker, and beginning with the prophecy of Joel concerning the pouring out of the spirit upon all flesh, preaches to them the life and death, and resurrection of Christ, and assures them, that these miraculous gifts descended upon the apostles from that Jesus whom the Jews had crucified and slain: "But we are witnesses," says he, "that God has raised him from the dead; and being exalted by the right-hand, or power of God, he has shed forth these wonderous gifts of the Holy Ghost, which the Father had promised him, and of which your own eyes and ears are present witnesses."

The two great subjects of my appointed discourse, are evidently contained in this text, *viz.* The exaltation of Christ to his kingdom, and his pouring down of the Holy Spirit.

In pursuit of the first of these, I shall shew you wherein consists the exaltation of Christ, and what are the several parts of it; and here I might take notice,

I. That at his ascension to heaven there was a glorious change passed upon his body to make it fit for the heavenly state: For though Christ was raised from the dead, yet being designed to continue forty days on earth, he was not raised in a glorified body; *Luke* xxiv. 39. He pronounces his *body to be flesh and bones, and bid his disciples handle him;* but St. Paul assures us, 1 Cor. xv. 50. *That flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor can corruption inherit incorruption;* and therefore the bodies of the saints at the resurrection must be all changed into spiritual and incorruptible, that is, such as are fit for the services of a glorified Spirit, and for an immortal life. Such a change passed upon the flesh and bones of our blessed Lord, when the bright cloud received him out of the sight of his disciples, and conveyed him upward to the mansions of light and immortality; *Acts* i. 8.

II. I might also take notice, in the next place, that it is part of the exaltation of Christ to be delivered from all possible sorrows, and pains, and temptations, to which he

was exposed in our world, to be placed above the reach of the malice of earth and hell, as well as to be delivered from all mortal infirmities, and to be filled with inward satisfaction and joy unspeakable. He is exalted to *the right-hand of God, where there are pleasures for evermore;* Psalm xvi. 11. His holy soul, which once endured such terrible conflicts and agonies, now sits triumphant in eternal peace, never to be ruffled and disquieted again. He now enjoys those sweet and sacred satisfactions of heart, which arise from the review of his own finished labours and sufferings; tiresome labours indeed, and tremendous sufferings, but never more to be repeated! He is now for ever drinking in fuller pleasures from the indwelling godhead, from the smiles of his Father's face, and shall never more complain, *My God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Matt. xxvii. 46. He, *for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame;* Heb. xii. 2. and these are the joys which he is now possessed of as a just and divine recompence.

III. He has authority given him by the Father to govern the world as long as it stands, and to judge it at the last day. *He is exalted to be both a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to men, and forgiveness of sins;* Acts v. 31. He calls those who are given him out of the world, and makes them parts of his church: He changes their sinful natures, he makes them the children of God, and pardons all their iniquities. Nor doth his kingdom reach only to his own church, who are his willing and joyful subjects, but it extends over the whole world; the rebellious and infidel nations are under his reign and controul. His lordship not only includes all mankind, but it reaches over angels and devils, over all the regions and the inhabitants of heaven, earth, and hell: *All things are put into his hands, and placed under his dominion; he is Lord of all;* Matt. xxviii. 18. Acts x. 36. He doth not reign only in Sion as heretofore, and as King of the Jewish nation, but *the heathens are now made his inheritance, and the utmost ends of the earth his possession;* Psalm ii. 8, 9. Not only his own followers and friends are under his government, but every creature is made subject to him: *His people are his willing subjects in this day of his power, and his enemies shall be made his footstool. Angels, principalities and powers, are put under him as his ministering servants,* for the purposes of his government over the church and the world: *Psalm* cx. 1—3. *Eph.* i. 20. *Heb.* i. 4. *Rev.* iii. 21.

And yet further; he is not only the appointed Heir and Lord of all, but he is constituted the final Judge of the living and the dead: He who stood once at the bar of Pilate and the high-priest as a transgressor, hath a throne of judgment preparing for him, and the high-priest and Pilate shall be arraigned there: All the tribes of the earth shall be gathered together before him, and shall receive their eternal sentence from his mouth. Matt. xxv. 31, 32, 34, 41. *God the Father hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, and has given assurance of it to all men, by raising him from the dead;* Acts xvii. 31. *The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment into the hands of his Son, and hath given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man;* John v. 22, 27.

IV. Our blessed Saviour must have a most extensive knowledge and power to execute this vast authority, and to fulfil this glorious trust.

Let us first consider his extensive knowledge. He has not only the kingdoms of nature and grace committed to his care, but the book of the decrees of God is put into his hands, that he may govern these kingdoms according to the Father's will. So that

text is generally explained; Rev. v. 1—9. *The Lamb in the midst of the throne came and took the book out of his Father's hand.* He must know what God hath ordained, that he may execute all his Father's counsels with regard to the church and the world, and that he may send his prophets to reveal to his church, so much as is needful for them to know. The whole book of the Revelation is an instance of this knowledge communicated to him by the Father. Rev. i. 1. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel to his servant John.* The day and hour of the last judgment, which were unknown to the Son in the days of his flesh; *Mark* xiii. 32. and were reserved in the Father's hand, are now laid open before him in this book of divine counsels. Both as a Priest and a King he must know the hearts of men. He must see their secret thoughts, that he may govern and judge them aright; 1 *Cor.* 4, 5. And he must know all the groans and breathings of holy souls, that he may present them in the sympathy of his affection before the Father, and may have a fellow-feeling of their infirmities and sorrows; *Heb.* ii. 18. and iv. 15.

Again, he must be acquainted with the hidden iniquities of men and devils, that he may countermine their pernicious plots, that he may sometimes prevent the mischiefs which they design, and sometimes permit them to accomplish their wicked purposes for the trial of his people. All the dark perplexities of providence, and the whole maze and labyrinth of human events, lies open before him, and the secret things in the heart of man; for *he must bring to light the hidden things of darkness, he must manifest the counsels of the heart, and reward every one according to their works;* 1 Cor. iv. 5. Rev. xxii. 12.

But besides all this, we must remember, in the next place, that he is possessed of active power equal to this extensive knowledge. What could the name of such a sublime authority do toward the government of all things, even if he had sufficient knowledge, without a correspondent power? It would be but a splendid title, and a mere shadow of kingship. But Jesus our King has universal royalty, and has power to support it. He must not sit like a shining cypher on the throne of government, nor on the tribunal of judgment. Rev. v. 6. *The Lamb who had been slain appears in the midst of the throne, with seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.* Whether this denotes the seven chief angels, which are prime ministers in the court of heaven, employed by our exalted Saviour, or whether the number "seven" signifies a perfection of knowledge and power, described by eyes and horns: still it must imply either such outward mediums of power and knowledge, or such inward capacities, as the Son of God is furnished with, in order to govern the ends of the earth, and execute his Father's decrees. The sun and moon with all their attendant lights, the earth, air, and sea, with all their millions of living inhabitants; nature and time, with all their wheels and motions, are put under his controul: all move onward in their constant courses by his word, and they shall stop at his command, and finish their last period. Then shall he call to the graves to give up their dead, the graves shall obey the Son of man, and the dead shall arise in millions at his call; *John* v. 26. And indeed, without such all-commanding power, which can subdue all things to himself, how can he execute the office of being *Head over all things for the good of his church?* How can he fulfil his Father's decrees? How is it possible he should transact the important affairs of the last day, that he should judge the intelligent creation, that he should

reward his friends and favourites in the heavens, and send his implacable enemies to the second death? I do not presume here to impute or ascribe all these things to the human nature of Christ as the agent:* It is sufficient if his human nature be made the constant and conscious medium whereby the indwelling godhead shall exercise these powers.

V. The last instance I shall mention wherein his exaltation consists is this; that "he is invested with honours suitable to his power and grandeur." While he was on earth he was obscure and unknown; and though he was the Son of God, yet the sons of men knew him not; 1 *John* iii. 2. *He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not;* John i. 10. And instead of doing honour to him, agreeable to his character and dignity, the princes and people of this world joined to affront and blaspheme him: He was reproached, he was buffetted, he was scourged, he was put to a shameful and cruel death. The princes and the people joined to *crucify the Lord of glory;* Acts iv. 27. 1 Cor. ii. 8. But the Son of God must not always be the mockery of sinful men. There were honours then reserved for him, which he is now possessed of, such as became his native perfections, and his acquired merit. The scriptures are full of these honours which are paid to the Son upon his exaltation. Phil. ii. 8—11. *Because he humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross, therefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.* And you find all the creation actually joining to pay him these honours, in Rev. v. 12, 13. *And the angels and the elders say with a loud voice, worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches, &c. And every creature in heaven, earth and sea, echo to the song, blessing and honour, and glory and power, be to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.* According to the tenor of scripture, I think the man Jesus is not capable of receiving these honours, without such a personal union to the godhead, as makes him a God-man, or one with God. And upon this foot I allow, with the learned and pious Doctor Owen, and other protestant writers, that the human nature of Christ, in the person of the Mediator, and considered as God-man, may be worshipped, and receive its own share of these honours, so far as is possible for a creature in so close an union with the eternal godhead.

Before I proceed to the second general part of the subject which is appointed me, I would make a few remarks or inferences from the first.

Remark I. Is Christ exalted to such glory, then all the real scandal of the cross ceases: It vanishes away and is lost, when the crucified man is all glorious at the right-hand of God. The scandal ceases from Christ, and it ceases from his people too: It is

* Yet if I should have ascribed all this to the human nature of Christ, considered as united to godhead, that great man, Dr. Thomas Goodwin, would abundantly support and vindicate me, in his discourse "of the Glories and Royalties of Christ as God-man;" vol. II. in folio, where he exalts the knowledge and power of the man Jesus Christ in many pages together to far higher degrees. Some of his expressions are such as these: "There is a wisdom in Christ's human nature, which is so high an imitation of the attribute of wisdom in God, as no mere creature could reach to or attain. Christ's human nature now glorified, knows all that God hath done, or means to do. By virtue of its union with the divine nature, it had a right to know both things past, present, and to come. The same holds in his power; it is not equal with God's, but there is an image of it in Christ's human nature, both in that he can do whatsoever he will, and whatsoever God will have done, he is the instrument of it;" *Matt.* xxviii. 18. "All the businesses of the world run through his hand and his head." What things soever the Father doth, the Son doth likewise; *John* v. 19. he speaks all this of himself as the Son of man; *verse* 27. and much more to this purpose.

no longer a matter of shame or folly to be a believer or follower of such a Jesus. The power and grandeur of the Son of God, sitting on so illustrious a throne, takes away and annihilates all the scandal of a man hanging on a tree. The time is coming, and it hastens apace, when the Jews shall be ashamed of their reproaches cast upon him, and the sons of men shall be confounded at the thoughts of their former mockery of the Son of God. If we keep this thought warm at our hearts, we shall never be ashamed of the profession of the cross of Christ.

II. Is Christ exalted by the Father's right-hand, "then his doctrines are worthy of our belief, his promises are worthy of our trust, and his laws of our obedience." His doctrines are certainly worthy of our belief; for never would God the Father have exalted his Son to such honours, if he had brought one doctrine to the world which was not divinely true. Had he not been a faithful prophet in delivering all his messages from God, he had never been raised to be a King. We may venture therefore safely to receive all the lessons that he teaches us.

And we may safely rely on his promises too; for when Jesus, the faithful witness, is exalted to be Lord of all, he can fulfil every promise he has made. We may venture to trust him, in our most important interests of heaven and eternity. Does he assure us, *that they who believe on him shall never perish?* John vi. 40. Then we may rejoice with St. Paul, *I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him till the great day;* 2 Tim. i. 12. Does he promise his followers, that he *will raise them from the dead, and give them eternal life?* John vi. 24. Then we may safely commit our bodies to the grave under his care, for these dead bodies *shall hear the voice of the Son of God and live:* The grave shall resign its prisoners at his command: He has the keys of death, and the gates of eternal life are in his keeping.

And as his promises are worthy of our trust, so are his laws of our obedience; for in this exalted state, he can enforce them powerfully with temporal and eternal rewards, with temporal and eternal punishments. Heaven, earth, and hell, with all that belong to them, being placed in his power, the blessings and the vengeance are within the reach of his hand; he shall distribute eternal recompences to men and angels, as the righteous and mighty judge of all. *Psalm* ii. 11, 12. *Serve the Lord with fear, kiss the Son, or adore him with love, lest you perish upon the spot, if his wrath be kindled but a little: But blessed are all they that put their trust in him.*

III. Is Christ exalted, then "his faithful followers have a pledge and pattern of their own exaltation, though not to equal degrees of pleasure, honour, or power." It is as their forerunner; he is entered within the vail, and is dignified with many glories, as their great representative. Is his body of flesh and blood by some glorious change made fitter for the heavenly world, and better suited to be the mansion or instrument of a glorified Spirit? Such shall be the bodies of all his people, for they must be like him: *He will change their vile bodies till they are made like his own glorious body;* Phil. iii. 21. Is his holy soul filled with all joy and blessedness in the presence of God, and in the review of his past labours and sufferings? Such shall be the felicity of their souls, for *they must be like him when they shall see him as he is:* 1 John iii. 2. *They shall rejoice for ever, and their joy shall no man take from them;* John xvi. 22. Is he exalted to power and dominion, to a crown and a throne, and to royal honours? His followers also must have a crown of life and righteousness; they shall sit upon thrones to judge the tribes of Israel; they shall have power over the nations, and share, according to their measure

and capacity, in the honours of an exalted Saviour; *Rev.* ii. 10, 26. and iii. 21: *Matt.* xix. 28. Fix the eye of your faith on a glorified Jesus, and behold there a pattern of your own joys and glories; such honour have all his saints; *Psalm* cxlix. 9. But again I say, remember that your character and your share is far inferior to his; you are but members, he is the head: You are but sinners saved, he is the Saviour and without sin: You are but adopted children, he is the original Son: You are but creatures made in time, he is the Son of God before the creation: *In the beginning he was with God, and he was God;* John i. 1. *In all things he must have the pre-eminence;* Col. i. 18.

IV. Is Christ exalted, " then he can secure to himself and to his people whatsoever honours or blessings his humiliation has purchased, for himself or for them." He offered up himself a sacrifice for the sins of men, and thereby, according to the ancient covenant with his Father, he procured a seat of glory and power at his right-hand for himself, and eternal salvation for all his people. He is risen from the dead, he is possessed of these promised powers, he can vindicate his own honours, and insure grace and glory, and all the blessings of the purchased salvation to all his people.

V. Is Christ exalted to the kingdom, then " the plots of all his enemies in earth and hell against his church are but vain devices." His enemies must submit to him, or perish before him. When God has set his Son Jesus as *king on his holy hill Zion;* Psalm ii. 1—12. and *given him the heathen for his dominion;* it is but a vain and fruitless rage, that the princes or people can discover against his kingdom. Let the *kings of the earth be wise,* let them *serve the Lord with fear,* and bow before him, or he shall crush them *with a rod of iron, and dash them as a potter's vessel.* The church of Christ may rejoice in her lowest estate, having such a Ruler and such a Saviour on high. He will never forget nor forsake her interests, till he has fulfilled all his Father's promises, and made her all glorious and blessed for ever.

I proceed now to the second general head of my subject; and that is, to consider the pouring down of the Spirit at the exaltation of Christ. This was matter of astonishment to the Jews, and to the inhabitants of all nations who were gathered together at the feast. This is generally represented, and with great propriety, as the noble donatives which a conqueror distributes on the day of his triumph, or the royal gifts of a king scattered among his people at his coronation. Thus it is prophesied in *Psalm* lxviii. 18. Thus it is recorded in history: Eph. iv. 8. *He ascended on high, he led captivity captive, he triumphed over the powers of darkness, which had led captive the nations of the earth, he received gifts for men,* saith the prophet, *even for the rebellious or heathen world, that the Lord God might dwell amongst them, as he dwelt of old in Sion.* The apostle interprets this verse, that he gave gifts to men, even the gifts of the Holy Spirit, to make apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, for the conversion of sinners, and the edification of the church. These are the glorious blessings, or gifts of the Spirit, which he received of the Father, and which he shed forth on his disciples, under the visible emblem of tongues of fire. Let it be first observed here, that these divine donatives, these influences of the Holy Spirit are generally distinguished into gifts and graces; and though in truth they are all really gifts of the Spirit from the grace of an exalted Saviour, yet it is chiefly those new capacities or powers of action which are usually called gifts, and are reckoned among his extraordinary operations, because they belong chiefly to the primitive times; whereas the christian virtues are more frequently

called the graces, or fruits of the Spirit, and are attributed to his ordinary influences, because they continue through all ages of the church.*

Let it be observed, in the second place, that these extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit did not necessarily carry with them christian virtues or graces; for in *Matt.* vii. 22. our Saviour declares, that some *who prophesied in his name, and cast out devils* by virtue of these gifts, *were workers of iniquity, he will not know them*, he will at the last day bid them depart from him, and banish them for ever from his presence; and, on the other hand, the graces of the Spirit are bestowed on thousands in every age, where these extraordinary gifts were never received; though some suppose that in the primitive days all that were converted by the apostles themselves received some or other of these gifts by the imposition of their hands.

Give me leave now briefly to set before you, the several kinds of these gifts and graces of the Spirit of God, which were poured down from heaven upon men by our exalted Saviour; together with a hint of the chief designs or uses of them, and then I shall conclude with some remarks upon them.

The extraordinary gifts are of various kinds; they are represented by the apostle Paul 1 *Cor.* xii. 8—11. and explained by learned and ingenious writers. In the first place, the word of wisdom, or an extensive acquaintance with the mysteries of christianity, the doctrines and duties of the religion of Christ. This eminently belonged to the apostles, that they might be able upon all occasions to preach the gospel in all the substantial and necessary parts of it, and answer the questions of importance which were proposed to them. The next was the word of knowledge, which may imply such an insight into the Old Testament, and the writings of the prophets, as to cite them, and happily apply them by way of interpretation or allusion, to illustrate or confirm the gospel of Christ, and to refute the Jewish abuses and perversions of them. The third is the gift of faith, that is, probably, a peculiar impulse that came upon them from heaven, when any difficult matter was to be performed, which inwardly assured them, that the Spirit of God would enable them to perform it. Then follows the gift of healing of various distempers by a word of their mouth, or a touch of their hand, and the gift of working other miracles also, even the power of inflicting diseases or death itself upon offenders. So St. Paul not only healed the maladies of men, but struck Elymas the sorcerer blind; So St. Peter not only bid Tabitha arise from the dead, but he also pronounced sudden death upon Ananias and Sapphira. Another of these gifts was prophecy, which, taken in general, signifies a power to speak by inspiration: And perhaps it may include the gift of utterance or freedom of speech: But in a more particular sense implies the foretelling of things to come. So Paul foretold the rise of antichrist; 1 *Thess.* ii. 17. And Agabus, a christian prophet, predicted the famine in the days of Claudius Cæsar; *Acts* xi. 28. Besides these, there was the gift of discerning spirits; that is, either of discovering the heart of a man, which, on some occasions, might be necessary in those early days of the gospel, or of discerning the temper and talents of a person, that it might be better judged in what service to employ him. And after these follow the gifts of tongues and the interpretation of tongues, whereby one person could speak several foreign languages which he never learned, that he might preach the gospel to persons of distant nations: And another could interpret tongues, or explain to the bulk of the

* I grant my text speaks chiefly, if not only, of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit; but as the graces proceed also from the Spirit of Christ exalted, I thought it not proper to omit them here.

assembly what was spoken in a strange language, for the use of strangers who might come amongst them. Besides all these, we might reckon also the gifts of singing psalms and praying by the Spirit, which parts of worship were performed by inspiration in those primitive times. Thus much of the gifts.

The graces of the Holy Spirit are also of various kinds; for they include all those christian virtues, or principles of holiness, which are wrought in the hearts of men by the influence of the Holy Ghost, such as faith, repentance, love to God and man; add to these meekness, temperance, a well-grounded hope, holy joy, patience in suffering, and courage to profess the name and religion of Christ, even in the face of death and martyrdom; 2 *Tim.* i. 7. See the fruits of the Spirit reckoned up by the apostle, *Gal.* v. 22, 23. *Eph.* v. 9.

The design of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, which were shed forth by our ascended Saviour, was to spread the gospel more speedily in the world, to diffuse an overpowering evidence of it among men, and to establish this new religion in the earth; *Heb.* ii. 3, 4. This *great salvation at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him: God also bearing them witness both with* signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, *according to his own will.* St. Paul assures the Corinthians, that when an unlearned man, or an unbeliever, came into their assemblies, and heard them speak by inspiration the doctrines of the gospel in a proper manner, *he is convinced, he is judged, the secrets of his heart are made manifest, and falling down on his face, he will worship God, and will report that God is in you of a truth;* 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. And indeed without these demonstrations of the Spirit attending the gospel in the first publication of it, it was not to be supposed that so new and strange a religion should make its way like lightning through the nations, in opposition to the prejudices of mankind and the power of princes, and in a few years illuminate so many dark countries, which had lain for long ages under the shadow of death. When christianity was well established in the world, these extraordinary gifts died away by degrees.

As for the graces of the Spirit, the design of them was directly to change sinners into saints, and to raise a church for Christ among men. These were communicated sometimes in an extraordinary manner and degree in the primitive days, in order to give the gospel a more speedy success, after the exaltation of our blessed Lord: But these are continued also in following ages, and sent down among men daily, by our blessed Saviour in his glorified state, who is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, that he may maintain an everlasting kingdom on earth, through all ages, by bestowing repentance on men, and forgiveness of sins; *Acts* v. 31. It is by these influences new converts are made, sinners are called and sanctified, churches are raised or continued in a long succession, and the family of Christ restored, when it is diminished by the persecution of tyrants on earth, or by calling away the saints to heaven by death in the course of nature.

Thus I have given you a very brief account of the influences of the blessed Spirit, both with regard to gifts and graces, which were promised by the Father, and shed forth by our exalted Saviour, together with the most eminent and important uses and designs of them. Permit me now to conclude with these four remarks:

Remark I.—Since the gifts of the Spirit are shed forth in a way of promise and prediction, they more plainly appear to be divine. It is the promised Spirit which our

Saviour gave to men. It can never be said they were casual events, or they happened by chance, for they were foretold by the ancient prophets, by John the Baptist, and by our blessed Saviour: They were promised to Christ Jesus by his Father, and he promised them to his own disciples, and bid them wait at Jerusalem till they received them; *Luke* xxiv. 49. There is a long shining track of divine promise and faithfulness, and a blessed harmony of grace and truth, that runs through all this event of the pouring down of the Holy Spirit, and we may trace it through the writings of the prophets and apostles with sacred delight. Is the Spirit sent down to men in this wonderous manner, then God has not failed of his promises to the Jews and gentiles, made by his ancient prophets; then the Father hath not failed of his promise to his Son Jesus, nor has the Son of God failed of his promise to his disciples and followers; *Acts* ii. 16, 17. *Luke* xxiv. 49. *John* xv. 26. *Acts* i. 8. compared with my text.

II. Are these wonderons gifts of the Spirit sent down to publish and confirm the blessed gospel; then surely "it demands our firmest faith, since it was propagated at first by such divine miracles, and has been established by such surprizing and glorious gifts." How wisely has God ordained these visible and sensible wonders, to prove the exaltation of his Son Jesus, when he left the world, and became invisible to men? *He hath shed forth all this which you see and hear;* and this is the last and the greatest witness to christianity, and it confirms all the rest. Our Saviour wrought many miracles indeed, and he spoke as never man spake; yet he assured his disciples, that after his departure they should not only do the same works, *but greater works than these shall ye do, because I go to my Father;* John xiv. 12. Our blessed Lord cast out devils, healed diseases, and raised the dead; what greater works then can we suppose were left for the apostles to perform, or what greater gifts than these can be conferred upon them? May I have leave to express a conjecture here, that these might be *the word of wisdom and knowledge, and the gift of tongues.* We grant it was indeed a miracle to heal the bodies of the sick with a word; but does it not seem a more astonishing thing, that the souls of persons, who were in a great measure ignorant of divine truths, should be at once illuminated with a word of wisdom, should be furnished so soon with such an extensive knowledge of the mysteries, doctrines, and duties of the gospel, that they were able to preach them to an ignorant world; and that they should be so fully persuaded of these doctrines at once, in opposition to many former prejudices which reigned in them, that they could now venture their lives in the defence of these divine truths, which they learned from Heaven by such an inspiration: It is granted again, that it is a miracle to make the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, to put life into a dead body: But is it not a more amazing event, that the mind of a fisherman, who knew nothing but his mother-tongue, should at once be furnished with a million of words, even the languages of various nations, and that his organs of speech should be enabled to pronounce them right, which would be the learning and labour of two or three ages; and that they should speak to *every man in their own tongue the wonderful works of God?* And yet still this wonder is greater, when we consider that the apostles not only spake with strange tongues themselves, but they communicated this gift of tongues to others also, which was never done by our Saviour himself in his own life time. Such were the attestations to the gospel of our blessed Lord, and so bright was the evidence that was shed over it by these gifts of the Spirit, that this is appointed to be the supreme seal to the truth of it, and he that blasphemes the Holy Ghost, and renounces this evidence, after it has been con-

vincingly set before him, and obstinately attributes these divine wonders to the sleights of men, or to the craft of the devil, is sealed up under condemnation by the lips of the Saviour of the world; and there is no forgiveness for him; *Matt.* xii. 31, 32.*

III. Though Jesus, the founder of the christian religion, submitted to death, yet the christian church was never designed to die, because Jesus lives again in an exalted state, and hath all the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit in his hand, which have been the life and soul of the church. When he left the world, he sent down his Spirit, both in the gifts and graces of it, to raise and maintain a temple or dwelling for himself in it so long as the world should stand: He hath promised that his Spirit should abide with it for ever, at least for the ordinary communication of gifts, and the influences of special grace, and therefore *the gates of hell or death shall not prevail against it;* Matt. xvii. 18.

And it might be added here also, that this is the reason why believers persevere in faith and holiness, because Jesus, their exalted head, has the fulness of the Spirit in him, and it is from him that the members derive their life, and all their support. *He that was dead is alive, and behold he lives for ever;* Rev. i. 18. And because I live, says our blessed Lord, ye shall live also; *John* xiv. 19.

IV. This thought points to us "whither to direct our eyes and hopes, when the Spirit of God is withdrawn from amongst us." Since Jesus ascended to heaven, the great God communicates his promised Spirit to men only through the hands of his Son. Let ministers, let christians, let churches learn, whence to derive new supplies, new gifts, new graces and influences, when spiritual things run low in the midst of them. It is from the hand of an exalted Saviour that we must receive all these blessings: It is he must give new life to all his churches under their dying circumstances, and new zeal and vigour to our souls under all their witherings and decays.

Thus all-glorious and divine is our salvation, from the original love, power, and promise of God the Father, through the sufferings, the death, and exaltation of Jesus Christ his Son, and by the gifts and graces of the Blessed Spirit. Hence arise the talents and furniture of ministers, and hence the faith and hope, the life and holiness, the joy and comfort of christians. Nor can I put a sweeter period to such a discourse as this, than in those words of the great apostle, which unite the divine springs of our salvation: 2 Cor. xii. 14. *May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be for ever with you.* Amen.

* Of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the efficacy and power of them, to prove and confirm the gospel of Christ, see the best account that ever I read in "Miscellanea Sacra." Essay I.

SERMON XLIX.

THE PERPETUAL OBLIGATION OF THE MORAL LAW; THE EVIL OF SIN, AND ITS DESERT OF PUNISHMENT.

I JOHN iii. 4.

SIN IS THE TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW.

AND ROM. vi. 23.

THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH.

THE blessed God has an undoubted right to command and govern his creatures, and when he makes known his will, or lays the knowledge of it within their reach, this becomes a law to them, this determines what is their duty; and a transgression of this law, or disobedience to it, is sin; and sin carries in it the notion of moral evil, which deserves some penalty to be inflicted on the sinner. Now that the moral law is such a law as I have described, and has such consequences attending the transgression of it; I shall endeavour to shew in the following method:

I. I shall consider what we mean by the moral law, and where this law is to be found.

II. I shall prove that it reaches to all mankind, and is of perpetual obligation.

III. That sin, or the transgression of it, is a very great and heinous evil.

IV. That it justly deserves punishment from the hands of God. I shall pursue each of these in their order.

The first inquiry is, What we mean by the moral law? To which I answer, The moral law signifies that rule which is given to all mankind to direct their manners or behaviour, considered merely as they are intelligent and social creatures, as creatures who have an understanding to know God and themselves, a capacity to judge what is right and wrong, and a will to chuse and refuse good and evil. This law, I think, does not arise merely from the abstracted nature of things, but also includes in it the existence of God, and his will manifested some way or other, or at least put within the reach of our knowledge; it includes also his authority, which obliges us to walk by the rule he gives us. The commands or requirements of the moral law may be represented in different views, but all agree in the same design and substance. Sometimes the moral law is represented as requiring us to seek after the knowledge of that God who made us, as obliging us to believe whatsoever God discovers to us, and as commanding us to perform those duties he prescribes, and to abstain from those things which he forbids.

Sometimes again this moral law is represented by distinguishing it into those duties which we owe to God, to our neighbours, and to ourselves. The duties which we owe to God are fear and love, trust and hope, worship and obedience, prayer and praise, doing every thing to his glory, and patience under his providences in life and death. The duties which we owe to our neighbours are submission to our superiors, compassion to our inferiors, truth and fidelity, justice and honesty, benevolence and goodness toward all men. The duties which we owe to ourselves are sobriety and temperance; and in

general the moral law requires a restraint of our natural appetites and passions within just bounds, so that they neither break out to the dishonour of God, to the injury of our neighbour, or to hinder us in the pursuit of our own best interests.

There is yet another general representation of the moral law, which is used in scripture both in the Old and New Testament. It is mentioned by Moses, *Deut.* vi. 5. *Lev.* xix. 18. and repeated and confirmed by our blessed Saviour, Matt. xxii. 37. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul, and thy neighbour as thyself; on these two commandments hang all the law and prophets:* And therefore St. Paul, *Rom.* xiii. 10. tells us, *love is the fulfilling of the law.* For he that loves God and his neighbour as he ought, will perform all necessary duties toward them, as well as govern himself aright in obedience to God his Maker.

Having explained what I mean by the moral law, we come to inquire where it is to be found? I answer, it is found in the ten commands given to the Jews at Sinai; it is found in the Holy Scriptures, scattered up and down through all the writings of the Old and New Testament; and it may be found out in the plainest and most necessary parts of it, by the sincere and diligent exercise of our own reasoning powers. It was written by the finger of God in tables of stone; it is written by the inspiration of God in the Holy Bible; and it is written in the hearts and consciences of mankind by the God of nature. The voice of God from heaven proclaimed this law, the voice of the prophets and apostles confirm it, and the voice of conscience, which is the vicegerent of God in the heart of man, speaks the same thing.* See *Rom.* ii. 14, 15. which must be thus explained: *When the gentiles, who have not the written law, are admonished by nature, and their own consciences, to do things contained in the written law, their hearts and reasoning powers are a natural law to themselves, which shews or discovers the work of the written law or ten commands impressed on their hearts; their very consciences bearing witness for or against themselves, and accusing, or excusing them, according as they have obeyed or broke that natural law within them.*

The second general head of my discourse leads me to prove, that this moral law is of universal and perpetual obligation to all mankind, even through all nations and all ages. The will of God their Maker concerning their conduct being revealed to them, or laid within the reach of their knowledge, as I said before, becomes a law or rule of life to men. Now this moral law is so far discovered to all, whether Jews, gentiles, or christians, both by the light of reason, and by the writings of the Old and New Testament, and thus it becomes a universal law which requires the obedience of all mankind. And as it hath universal authority over all men, so its obligation is perpetual and everlasting; there cannot be any dissolution of it, nor a release from its commands or requirements; which will appear if we consider the following reasons:

I. "It is a law which arises from the very existence of God and the nature of man:"

* That which is in the heart of a man is called the natural law, because it arises from our natural principles of reason; that which was given at Sinai is more frequently termed the written law: Both are called the moral law, yet with these few differences. 1. The written law is more clear and express in ten particular commands; the natural law is more secret and less evident, especially among the greatest part of mankind. 2. The written law was a more peculiar favour of God given to the Jewish nation; the natural law lies within the reach of all men whose consciences are not grossly blinded or hardened by sin. 3. The natural law contains nothing but moral precepts or rules of life for men, as intelligent, sensible, and sociable creatures. The written law includes in it something ceremonial, that is, the seventh day sabbath, and other modes of expression peculiar to the Jewish state and people: But the grand requirements and the design of both these are the same, as appears in many scriptures, especially *Rom.* ii. 14, 15.

It springs from the very relation of such creatures to their Maker and to one another. Every creature must owe its all to him that made it; and therefore all its powers ought to be employed so as to bring some honour to its Maker God. He is the supreme Lord and Ruler, and he ought to be reverenced and obeyed: He is all-wise and almighty, he ought to be feared and worshipped: He is in himself the most excellent of beings as well as merciful and kind to us, and the spring of all our present comforts and our future hopes, he ought therefore to be loved above all things, and to be addressed with prayer and praise; nor can it ever be said that a creature is under no obligation to love and obey, to fear and worship his Creator, or to render what is due to his fellow-creatures, even according to his utmost powers.

II. "This law is so far wrought into the very nature of man as a reasonable creature, that an awakened conscience will require obedience to it for ever." Wheresoever the reasoning powers of man are diligent and sincerely attentive to his most important concerns, he must acknowledge the great God demands our best obedience, our honour and our love, and he deserves it: Every conscience acting on reasonable principles must confess, that truth and honesty ought to be practised towards our neighbour, and temperance and sobriety with regard to ourselves; that we are bound to restrain our vicious appetites and passions within the rules of reason and our better powers; that we must not be savage or cruel to others, nor must we abuse our understanding and our senses which God has given us for better purposes, and by drowning them in wine and strong liquors, or by any intemperance behave like the brutes that perish. As long as man is man, and reason is reason, so long will this law be a rule to mankind.

III. This law must be perpetual, "for it is suited to every state and circumstance of human nature, to every condition of the life of man, and to every dispensation of God:" And since it cannot be changed for a better law, it must be everlasting. It is suited to the state of man in innocence, and of man fallen from his happiness: It is suited to every tribe and nation of mankind: All are required to yield their utmost obedience to the commands of God. It began in paradise as soon as man was created, and it will never cease to oblige in this world or the other. Neither Jew nor gentile, neither saint nor sinner on earth, nor Enoch, nor Elijah, nor the blessed spirits in heaven, nor the ghosts of the wicked under the punishments of hell, are released from their obligation to this law, which requires them to love and honour God, and to be faithful and just to man: For if any persons whatsoever were released from the bond of this law, they would not be guilty of sin, nor do amiss in neglecting the practices of virtue and godliness.

IV. It appears yet further that this law is perpetual, because whatsoever other law God can prescribe, or man can be bound to obey, it is built upon the eternal obligation of this moral law. Every positive command of rites and ceremonies, and sacrifices given to the patriarchs, or the Jews; every command of faith in the Messiah, trust in the blood of Jesus, and obedience to him in his exalted state; every institution of the Old Testament and the New, circumcision and baptism, the feast of the passover and of the Lord's supper, with all the forms of worship and duty towards God and man, which ever were prescribed, receive their force and obligation from the moral law. It is this law which requires all men to believe whatsoever God shall reveal with proper evidence, either by the exercise of their own reason, or by his divine revelation: It is the moral law that requires our heart and hands to yield obedience to all the positive laws God has given to men: Some of those rites and ceremonies, so far as we can discover, seem not

to be of any great importance in themselves; but a wilful neglect of the least of them is a disobedience to the great God, and a violation of this law; and I think we may say that if this law were abolished, no other could bind us: for it is one of the first and strongest requirements of this law, that a creature must obey his Maker in all things. And for this reason it was that our blessed Saviour, who had no need to be washed from sin, yet submitted to baptism under the ministry of John his forerunner, even when John seemed to dissuade him from it. Matt. iii. 15. *Suffer it to be so now, said he, for thus it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness, that is, to obey whatever God commands.*

V. I would add in the last place, that scripture asserts the perpetuity and everlasting obligation of the moral law. Luke xvi. 17. *It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for the least tittle of the law to fail;* and our blessed Saviour declares; Matt. v. 17. that *he came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it:* by which he cannot mean the Jewish ritual which was soon abolished, but he means eminently the moral law, for it is the precepts of that law he proceeds to explain. And it is in conformity to this doctrine the apostle Paul makes use of this law to convince Jew and gentile, and all mankind in all ages, that they are sinners, and guilty before God, in the second and third chapters to the Romans. *By the law is the knowledge of sin,* whether the natural law of the heathens, or the written law of the Jews: All have broken this moral law of God, *every mouth is stopped, and all the world lies guilty before God.*

I know that there are some contrary opinions rising up in the heart of man against this doctrine. Some have objected here, that since the fall of Adam no mere man is able perfectly to comply with the demands of it, for it requires universal obedience in thought, word, and action, and a perfect abstinence from every sin; but since no man is able to yield this obedience, it can never be supposed that a righteous and a gracious God can continue to require it. To this I answer, *first,*

Answer I.—That man has not lost his natural powers to obey this law; he is bound then as far as his natural powers will reach: I own his faculties are greatly corrupted by vicious inclinations or sinful propensities, which has been happily called by our divines a moral inability to fulfil the law, rather than a natural impossibility of it. But though the powers of man be vitiated, and his inclinations to evil are so strong that they will never be effectually subdued without divine grace, yet the great and holy God continues still to demand a perfection of obedience; he cannot give an imperfect law, or a law that requires but an imperfect obedience to it. His title, as the Creator and the God of nature, demands the best service that our natural powers can perform: Our understanding and will, our heart, and hand, and tongue, owe him their utmost obedience. Besides, if the law did not continue to require our best and highest obedience, we should not be guilty of sin where we fall short of perfection; that is, if we loved God in part, if we serve him in part, though it was not *with all our mind, with all our soul, with all our heart, and with all our strength,* yet we should not be transgressors; but this I think is a very absurd supposition. I answer in the second place,

II. That the moral law may continue still to demand perfect obedience of all men, though since the fall they cannot perfectly fulfil it; for the grace of the gospel which is revealed in scripture, and which runs through every dispensation since the fall of Adam, has not abated the demands of the law, though it has provided a relief for us under our failings. And though we do not fulfil what God requires in this law, yet he condescends in this gospel to pardon and to accept the humble, the sincere, the penitent sinner, on

the account of the perfect obedience and atoning sacrifice of his own Son. It is granted indeed, that all men who have been saved in the way of the gospel have yielded but a very imperfect and defective obedience to this law, yet still the law of God demands a perfection of holiness according to our utmost natural powers and capacities; the law demands that *we sin not at all;* but the gospel says, *If we sin we have an Advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous, who is a propitiation for the sins of the world:* 1 John ii. 2.*

Having proved the perpetual obligation of the moral law, I proceed to the third part of my discourse, and that is, briefly to represent the evil nature of sin. Our text informs us wherein it consists. *Sin is the transgression of the law.* When a creature transgresses any command that God hath given, he commits sin; but this chiefly refers to the moral law, because it is this law upon which all others are founded, and which gives force and authority to them all. Now there is a heinous evil contained in the nature of sin, if we consider the following characters of it.

I. "It is an affront to the authority and government of a wise and holy God, a God who has sovereign right to make laws for his creatures, and has formed all his commands and prohibitions according to infinite wisdom." Every act of wilful sin does as it were deny the sovereignty of God over us, and the property that God has in us, according to the expression of profane sinners, *Psalm* xii. 4. *Our lips are our own, who is Lord over us?* Wilful sin against God renounces his right to govern us, and pours high contempt upon his wisdom and his righteous dominion; it denies his laws to be wise and righteous, as though they were not fit to be enjoined of God, or practised of men.

II. "Sin carries in the nature of it high ingratitude to God our Creator, and a wicked abuse of that goodness which has bestowed upon us all our natural powers and talents, our limbs, our senses, and all our faculties of soul and body." Such a Creator, who has furnished his creatures with so many excellent faculties, may reasonably

* There is also another objection against this doctrine which some raise from the words of scripture. Does not the apostle tell Timothy that *the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners?* &c. 1 Tim. i. 9. But this is readily answered, by considering what is the apostle's meaning here. It is only to shew, that disobedient and ungodly men have need of particular and express laws or precepts, with threatenings and terrors annexed to them, in order to restrain them from iniquity; but the righteous man hath a sanctified nature, and an inward aversion within himself, to all evil practices; and therefore though his conscience acknowledge him to be under the commands of this law, yet he does not so much need the express and public proclamation of it in order to secure him in the practice of duty.

It has been objected again, that St. Paul confirms the christians, and encourages them to holiness, by telling them they *are become dead to the law, and they are delivered from the law, that being dead, wherein they were held;* Rom. vii. 4, 6. To this I answer, that the apostle allows that christians are delivered also from the law as to its cursing and condemning power by their pardon and justification in Christ Jesus; they are delivered also from the unhappy effect which the law may sometimes have upon the hearts of sinners to irritate, awaken and provoke sin in them, by lusting for things forbidden; but he does not allow even himself, or the best of christians, to be delivered or released from the commands of the law; for in this very place, he is persuading christians to holiness or obedience to the precepts of the law; and in 1 *Cor.* ix. 21. he declares, he is *not without law to God, but he is under the law,* as it is in the hands of Christ. Not an apostle nor an angel from heaven can release creatures from the demands of duty to their Creator, for while we are the work of the hand of God, and continue to be creatures, this law never ceases to command perfect obedience to the God that made us, viz. *that we must love him with all our soul, and with all our strength.*

Nor do all the lessening expressions which the apostle uses in his epistle to the Hebrews against the law, give us a release from the moral law, for his design is only to shew the weakness and unprofitableness of the Jewish law, or covenant of Sinai, in comparison of the glorious state of the gospel, and the new covenant, when the moral law shall be written on the hearts of men. *Heb.* vii. 8. and viii. 10. 13. This is the law that must stand for ever, when the Jewish covenant vanishes and is abolished.

expect and demand of them a return of love and obedience; but to employ these very talents and powers for the dishonour of him who gave them, is abominable in itself, and highly provoking to that God who formed us.

III. Sin against the law of God, "breaks in upon that wise and beautiful order which God has appointed to run through his whole creation." *Prov.* xvi. 4. *God has made all things for himself* and his own glory; but if we set up ourselves and our own honour as the chief end of all, and neglect to pay our duty and honours to the blessed God, we run counter to this divine appointment, and place ourselves in the room of God. He has ordained that his creatures should be mutually helpful to each other, and that man should love his neighbour; but if malice, and envy, and falsehood prevail in us, and if cruelty and injustice be practised toward our fellow-creatures, the proper and beautiful harmony between the intelligent creatures is broken, and it is a hateful thing in the eyes of God to see those rules of order violated, renounced and trampled upon, which he has established with so much wisdom and justice. Yet further, God has ordained reason in man to govern his appetites and passions, and all his inferior powers: But sin brings shameful confusion into our very frame, while it exalts the appetites and passions to reign over our reason, to break the rules and dictates of conscience, and transgress all the bounds of reasonable restraint. Sin working in the heart gives a loose to those licentious and unruly powers of nature, and spreads wild disorder through all the life.

IV. As it is the very nature of sin to bring disorder into the creation of God, so its natural consequences are pernicious to the sinful creature! Every act of wilful sin tends to deface the moral image of God in the soul, and ruin the best part of his workmanship. It warps the mind aside from its chief good, and turns the heart away from God and all that is holy. Sin forms itself in the heart into an evil principle and habit of disobedience; one sin makes way for another, and increases the wretched trade of sinning. A frequent breaking the restraints of law and conscience not only strengthens the inclination to vice, but it enfeebles the voice and power of conscience to withhold us from sin: it sets man a-running in the paths of intemperance and malice, folly and madness, down to perdition and misery: It many times brings painful diseases upon the body, and it is the spring of dreadful sorrows in the soul: All these are the natural consequences of sin.

V. In the last place I add, "sin provokes God to anger, as he is the righteous Governor of the world; it brings guilt upon the creature, and exposes it to the punishments threatened by the broken law. When sin entered into the nature of man, there was an end of all the friendly converse between him and his Maker. Man is afraid of God, and God is angry with man. Sin throws him out of his Maker's former favour, and exposes him to the wrath and indignation of a righteous and almighty God, who will vindicate the honours of his own law. He is a *God of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and he is angry with the wicked every day;* Psalm vii. 11. The great Creator and Governor of the universe will not always bear to be affronted by such contemptible little worms as we are: *If we turn not from our evil ways, he will whet his sword, he has bent his bow and made it ready, he hath prepared for him the instruments of death, and the soul of the sinner shall feel his arrows.* Verse 12, 13.

And yet further, as God has set up conscience in the bosom of man to be a witness for God there, and to put man in mind of his Maker's law and his own duty, so this

power called conscience is also ordained to be a judge in the heart of man in the room of God, and to sentence and condemn the guilty creature, and to begin the execution of this sentence with sharp anguish of heart, with inward reproaches and bitter terrors. This home bred torment is a hell upon earth, and it often begins before the sinner dies.

Who sees not the dreadful evil of sin, in the wretched change that is introduced by it into the creation of God in the upper and lower worlds? It has turned angels of light into devils and spirits of darkness: It has thrown millions of glorious and happy beings out of their heavenly habitation: It made our first parents afraid of their Maker even in paradise, and turned them out of that happy garden. It brought many curses upon human nature, many sorrows and sufferings of every kind. It is sin that has run through every generation, and exposed us to all the evils that we feel, and to all that we fear, either from the hand of God, or our fellow-creatures. While man stood innocent and obedient, nothing could hurt him; but he broke the law of his God and renounced his government, and the bonds of love between mankind are broken, and the brute creatures have broken their subjection to man in a great degree. He who was made to govern them is afraid of them, and has often been destroyed by them: Innocence had been a sure and everlasting defence. All the desolations that have been made by famine and pestilence, and wars and earthquakes, and by the rage of wild beasts, from the beginning of the world, are owing to the sin of man.

But these thoughts bring me down to the fourth general head of my discourse, which is to consider the proper demerit of sin, or what is the punishment it deserves. This I shall represent under these four plain Propositions:

Proposition I.—" When God made man at first, he designed to continue him in life and happiness so long as man continued innocent and obedient to the law, and thereby maintained his allegiance to God his Maker." This is agreeable to the terms of the law represented in *Rom.* ii. 7. If he had patiently continued in well-doing, he should have enjoyed glory and honour, immortality and eternal life: And the blessed God seems to have promised it to man, at least by way of emblem and sacrament, in giving him the tree of life, and perhaps also by a more express promise of life, which, through the designed brevity of the history, Moses might not mention.

II. " By a wilful and presumptuous transgression of the law, man violated his allegiance to God his Maker, and forfeited all good things that his Creator had given him, and the hope of all that he had promised." Every sin incurs a forfeiture of life itself, and all the present and future comforts of it, according to the express words of the threatening; *Gen.* ii. 17. *In the day that thou eatest of the forbidden fruit thou shalt surely die*, that is, thou shalt become mortal and liable to death.* And the apostle tells us; *Rom.* vi. 23. *The wages of sin is death.* Nor is such a forfeiture of life and the blessings of it by sin, utterly unknown to the heathen world, as St. Paul declares;

* Death in its original, and most proper and natural sense, signifies the loss of life, and together with it the loss of all its blessings and comforts. This is the common if not the universal sense of the word in the writings of Moses: And in the sanction of a law it is reasonable to suppose the word is used in its most natural and proper sense. Death in scripture is used sometimes for the loss of privileges, blessings and comforts, even where life remains; in this sense it signifies the soul's loss of the image of God, of holiness and peace: This is called spiritual death. Thus the Ephesians are said to be dead in trespasses and sins. *Eph.* ii. 1. Sometimes death signifies the loss of blessings in the world to come, together with positive sorrows and sufferings both in soul and body for ever. So in *Rom.* viii. 13. *If ye live after the flesh ye shall die;* And *John* vi. 50. *This is the bread which came down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die.* In *Rev.* xxi. 8. this is called the second death. Now death in all these senses is either the natural consequent of sin, or it is the legal punishment of it, according to its several aggravations, as will appear afterward.

Rom. i. 32. *Who knowing the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death:* And I think the very light of nature might find out this; for it would be strange indeed if God the Creator should be bound to continue life or any blessing to a creature which had broken his allegiance to his Maker, and by a wilful and presumptuous offence, had as it were renounced the very end and design for which he was made.

III. "This forfeiture of life and the blessings of it by sin, is an everlasting forfeiture." Every sin is usually and justly supposed to increase its demerit or desert of punishment, according to the dignity of the person whose law is broken. Sin against a father or a prince carries greater guilt in it, than that which is committed against a neighbour or a servant: And in this way of argument sin against God appears to have a sort of infinite evil in it, because it is committed against the infinite Majesty of heaven: And on this account every sin deserves a sort of infinite or everlasting punishment, that is, an everlasting loss of life and all the blessings of it, which are eternally forfeited thereby. And perhaps this is the lowest punishment that ever is inflicted for the lowest degree of sin or guilt, where the law of God is suffered to take its proper course in executing the penalty; for the mere loss of life is a less punishment than the continuance of it in any degree of misery.

IV. "There is scarcely any actual, that is, wilful sin, but carries with it some particular aggravations, and these deserve such further positive punishments as the wisdom and justice of God shall see reason to inflict." Hence arises the penal continuance in life with the loss of all the comforts of it, that is, the pains and sorrows of the future state.* God is the righteous Governor of the world, his justice weighs in the nicest balances every command of his own law, and every grain of the sinner's offences, with all their circumstances of guilt and aggravation; and strict justice distributes sorrows in proportion to sins: This appears in the punishment of Babylon; *Rev.* xviii. 6. *God hath remembered the iniquities of Babylon, and rewarded her as she rewarded his saints: Double vengeance unto her, according to her double malice and persecution: How much she hath glorified herself and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her.* And this proportion of sorrow to sin will terribly appear in the last judgement and the final punishment of sinners in the world to come.† It is time now to conclude this discourse with some few reflections:

Reflection I. Is the law of God in perpetual force, and is every transgression of it so heinous an evil; then let "us take a survey how wretched and deplorable is the state of mankind by nature." We have all broken the law of our God, which we have been all

* This is usually called eternal death, or the punishment of hell.

† Now from the desert of sin and the punishment due to it being set in this light, I would humbly enquire whether we may not better learn the meaning of the apostle; *Rom.* v. 12—14. when he says, *Death entered into the world by sin, and passes upon all men, for that all have sinned;* that is, sin is imputed to all, and death reigns over them, even over those that have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, which is generally interpreted concerning infants, who have committed no actual personal sin as Adam did: Yet here is a forfeiture of life and its blessings derived to the children of Adam, and they come under a sentence of death by original, imputed sin, which we may suppose to be the lowest kind of guilt. But in *Rom.* ii. 8, 9. *Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, are denounced against every soul of man that doth evil,* that is, that doth commit wilful, actual sin, because there are special aggravations, some of a greater and some of a lesser kind, that belong to all actual iniquities.

Whether therefore sin has any particular aggravation attending it or no, there is an everlasting forfeiture of life incurred by it, and an eternal loss of the blessings of it; and whatsoever further aggravations the sin carries in it,

bound to obey; we are still bound to obey it, and are still breakers of it. Our daily thoughts, our words and our deeds, sufficiently shew us that we are transgressors, and there is in our nature a perpetual propensity to transgress. Where is the mortal that has lived according to the purity and perfection of this law? *There is none righteous; no, not one.* Rom. iii. 10, 12. Where is the son or daughter of Adam, that is not pronounced guilty and condemned by it? *Every mouth is stopped, and all the world is guilty before God.* What a miserable region is this earth, overspread with sinful inhabitants, criminal creatures, who are all transgressors against the law of the God that made them, and by the sentence of that law stand condemned to death, considered in their natural state?

II. Is the moral law of such constant obligation, and is death the due recompence of every transgression of it; "Then it is necessary for ministers to preach this law, and it is necessary for hearers to learn it." We should all know our duty and our danger. Not the best of christians are arrived at a dispensation above the knowledge and the practice of this law. There is no honour done to the gospel by explaining it in such a manner as to release us from the duties of the moral law; for it is one great design of the gospel to restore us again to a cheerful and regular obedience to it. To release christians from the precepts of the law is to make *Christ the minister of sin, and to turn the grace of our God into wantonness,* which the apostles Paul and Jude speak of with detestation and abhorrence. *Gal.* ii. 17. *Jude* verse 4. To pretend that obedience to the moral law is needless for christians who believe the gospel, is to deny and destroy, as much as in us lies, the great end for which Christ and the gospel came into the world; which is to *redeem us from all iniquity—that we might be zealous of good works;* Tit. ii. 14. *To deliver us from the curse of the law,* and the condemnation of it, that we might love the precepts of the law, and practise them with delight and newness of heart.

It is not therefore our preaching of the law to promote the gospel, that deserves the reproach of a legal sermon; but to preach the law instead of the gospel, or to preach the gospel as a law of works. Christ and St. Paul well understood the gospel, and yet they both preached the law in the commands and terrors of it. We must learn the law if we would be acquainted with our own guilt and danger, or if we would know our duty, and practise religion and virtue. *By the law is the knowledge of sin,* and by the law our feet are guided into the paths of righteousness. It is in the glass of the law of God that we see the sinfulness of our hearts and lives: It discovers every blot in our souls, and every blemish in our conversation: It lays us under guilt, it makes us know our misery, it humbles us to the dust before God, and is made use of by the blessed Spirit to drive us out of ourselves, and all our own pretences to righteousness, that we may seek the appointed salvation of Jesus, and fly to our better hope.

III. "What a holy regard and jealousy has God shewn for the honour of his everlasting law, and what a sacred indignation has he manifested against sin, when he sent his own Son to obey this law, and to suffer for our disobedience to it?" Not the Son of God himself, when he came into flesh and blood, was exempted from the duties of this

so much further pain or anguish does it deserve in body, or in mind, or in both; that is, it requires so much further continuance in life and being, as to sustain that degree of anguish and sorrow which is due to the sinner: And therefore the life of a wicked soul is continued in sorrows, in the other world, after the death of the body, as a punishment for sin; and therefore also at the last day shall be raised again, that all wilful and impenitent sinners may sustain punishments according to the various dispensations of God under which they have lived, and the several aggravations of their sins; and all these things shall be perfectly adjusted by the wisdom and righteousness of God, *who is the Judge of the whole earth, and always does what is right;* Gen. xviii. 25.

law, and he magnified it and made it honourable by his practice of it in perfection: And when so glorious and divine a person condescended to become a sacrifice for our transgressions against this law, he gave the highest instance of his own veneration for it, as well as of the just resentment of God his Father against every sin. The great and glorious God, the Governor of the world, thought it more necessary and becoming his majesty, that the Son of his love should be put to a painful and shameful death to make a propitiation for our sins against this law, than that any one transgression should be pardoned without an atonement. These awful sentiments should be an everlasting caution to us against entertaining slight thoughts of the evil of sin. It is no trifling matter to indulge the least sin, when it awakens the resentment and wrath of the eternal God. *Fools* are they indeed that *make a mock of sin;* Prov. xiv. 9. when the Son of God must die before it could be pardoned.

IV. "How glorious is the wisdom and the mercy of the gospel, which does honour to the law in every respect, which prepares an honourable atonement and pardon for guilty rebels who have broken this everlasting law, and provides grace and power to renew our nature according to the demands of it." It not only pardons returning transgressors, but it promises to write this law in the hearts of men, that it may be better observed and obeyed. A double and complete salvation. Read the language of the gospel and rejoice in it; *Heb.* viii. 10. *This is the covenant, saith the Lord, that I will make with men; I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.* And it is repeated *Heb.* x. 16, 17. The law of God requires universal and everlasting obedience, and it is an unspeakable blessing to have this obedience made natural and easy by sanctifying grace.

V. "Happy is the world above, where such natural and such easy obedience is for ever paid to this law of God without the least transgression." The moral law carries all its demands up to that blessed country, and whatsoever other laws are in force there, it is this eternal law that gives authority to them all, and every inhabitant answers all the demands of it by a free and cheerful obedience. Happy world indeed, where so pure and so perfect a law of the Creator cannot charge one creature with transgression and guilt! A world without sorrow and without sin! A strange unknown blessedness to creatures such as we, who were born and brought up in this dark region of sins and sorrows! It is the office of the law here on earth to give us the knowledge of sin; but there it shall lose this office, it shall convince us of sin no more; for it shall dwell in us, to discover the beauty of holiness and to make us for ever holy. Oh! when will the day come, that we shall be sanctified in this complete degree? When shall that blessed state commence, and the law be wrought into our nature with such power, and be practised with such perfection, that it will be able to bring no charge of sin against us either in thought, word or deed, for ever? While we groan here, being burdened under the remains of corruption, while the law of God which works in our consciences gives us many a severe reproof and heart-ach, let us look forward with hope and desire toward that state where our hearts shall be moulded into the very form of this law by the efficacy of divine grace, where sin shall be banished from all the powers of our souls, and pains, and sorrows, and death, and all the bitter fruits of sin, shall be done away, and shall be found no more for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON L.

THE LORD'S DAY, OR CHRISTIAN SABBATH.

GENESIS ii. 3.

AND GOD BLESSED THE SEVENTH DAY AND SANCTIFIED IT; BECAUSE THAT IN IT HE HAD RESTED FROM ALL HIS WORK, WHICH GOD CREATED AND MADE.

IN the history of the creation of the world, and the beginning of mankind, Moses gives us an account of the appointment of a sabbath, or one day in seven that should be sanctified or separated from the common affairs of this life, devoted to the purposes of religion, and receive a peculiar blessing from God. I think it cannot reasonably be supposed, as some writers have done, that the sacred historian would take such special notice in this place of a certain day, which was not appointed at that time, but which should be appointed, and sanctified, and blessed among the Jews two thousand four hundred years afterwards. It is probable that the most ancient patriarchs did, according to this early appointment, observe it as a day of rest from labour, and of the worship of God their Creator. And it is very evident, that if it were lost among the nations, it was renewed again by Moses to the people of Israel with many particular sanctions: and there is still one day in seven continues in the New Testament to be a day of christian worship, observed by the apostles and first disciples. So that upon the whole survey of the dispensations of God to men, as they are recorded in the Bible, "it seems highly probable, that there is some sabbath, or one day in seven, divinely appointed both for the rest of man and the worship of God, which has run through all dispensations both before and after Moses, and which must remain to the end of the world."

It is impossible, in the compass of one short sermon, to run through all the reasonings* that are necessary to confirm this doctrine; yet that I may give some short hints toward the proof of a sabbath running through all ages, I desire you will consider the following particulars:

1. "What was the time when the first appointment of a sabbath was given to men, and who were the persons to whom it was given?" Was it not in paradise as soon as ever man was created, that God claimed one day in seven for his own worship, as well as gave it unto Adam for his rest and release from labour in the garden of Eden? Now there is at least as much reason and as much need for all the sons of Adam, in all ages and nations, in their feeble and sinful state, to have a day appointed for their own rest and for the worship of their God, as there was for Adam himself in paradise and in a state of innocence; for his body was then in perfection of health and vigour, and his mind more inclined to remember God and worship him.

2. "Consider the original reason that is given for one day in seven to be sanctified," and this seems to confirm the perpetuity of it. God rested on the seventh day from his

* For these reasonings see "The Holiness of Times, Places, and Persons, under the Jewish and Christian Dispensations Considered and Compared."

work of creation: The sabbath was given to man to put him in mind of the creation of the world by the true God in six days, and to do honour to God the Creator. But all mankind, in all ages, aswell as Adam their Father, should preserve this truth in their remembrance: and the continual return of a seventh day of rest is an everlasting memorial of it, and gives opportunities continually for paying homage to that Almighty Being that made us.

3. "Consider the place which this command of the sabbath bears in the law of God, when it was renewed and enjoined to the nation of Israel:" This doth in the opinion of most divines add considerable weight to this argument. It is one of the commands of the moral law, that was pronounced by the mouth of God himself on Sinai, with much glory and terror: It stands amongst those laws in *Exodus* xx. 1—17. which are conceived to be moral and perpetual, except in some small limitations and accommodations to the Jewish state. *Remember the sabbath-day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work, but the seventh is the sabbath of the Lord thy God*, &c. It was written with the rest in the two tables of stone, which perhaps in that typical dispensation might denote perpetuity, and that it must last like a rock for ever. It was written by the finger of God himself, which gives a peculiar honour to it, and it was laid up in the ark of the covenant on which God dwelt in a bright cloud, or a blaze of glory behind the cloud; and thus it was put under God's own eye and care, together with those laws which are of perpetual obligation. It is granted indeed that in the books of Moses there are some peculiar rigours and ceremonies, and severe prohibitions of every earthly work under capital penalties, added to the sabbath, and enjoined to the Jews; but these do not belong to the sabbath considered in itself, but are properly the ceremonial and Jewish appendages of it.

4. When the apostles by divine appointment had abolished all the Jewish sabbaths, and all those ceremonies and peculiar austerities which belonged to the observation of the seventh day in the Jewish state; *Gal.* iv. 9—11. and *Col.* ii. 16, 17. yet "they still practised the observation of one day in seven, even the first day of the week, for christian worship, and they taught it to the churches." It was on the first day when the disciples met together with the doors shut for fear of the Jews, that the Saviour arose and appeared to them more than once; *John* xx. 19—23. and 26—30. It was on this day that pentecost fell out on that year, when the Spirit was poured down upon the disciples, as learned men assure us by their calculations, and then were three thousand converted at Peter's sermon; *Acts* ii. 1—4, 41. It was on the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread at Troas, and Paul preached to them; *Acts* xx. 7. It is on this day that St. Paul gives orders for a collection for the saints, or at least that every one should then lay by him in store for this purpose, in 1 *Cor.* xvi. 1, 2. This same order he gave also to the churches of Galatia. Thus the collection for the poor, which was made in the Jewish synagogues on the sabbath, seems to be transferred to the first day of the week among christians.

Let it be further added, that the religious appointment and observation of the first day of the week was so universal and so well known, that it acquired an honourable title in early times, and was called the Lord's Day; *Rev.* i. 10. even as the breaking of bread and the drinking of wine was called the Lord's Supper, both having a reference to the appointment and honour of our blessed Saviour; 1 *Cor.* xi. 20, 23. This practice also was continued by all those who professed the christian religion in the primitive times

and they were known and distinguished from the heathens as well as from the Jews by this particular character of observing the Lord's Day. If we take all these things together, they give us a great deal of reason to infer, that our blessed Saviour himself appointed the celebration of this day, and gave the apostles notice of it among the rest of those things which he taught them in the forty days after his resurrection, when he appeared to them, conversed with them, and instructed them in things that pertained to the kingdom of God, or the institution or support of his visible church; *Acts* i. 3.

5. "Consider the reasonableness and the necessity of such an appointment, in order to keep up religion in the world, as well as to give rest to the animal bodies of men and beasts." This is another proof of the morality or perpetuity of it. The seasons of worship which men would have chosen, and even of natural rest which some men would have allowed either to themselves or their servants, probably would have been short and few enough, if God had not always devoted one day in seven to these purposes. It is evident in common experience and by observation made upon persons, and churches, and nations, that where no sabbath is observed, where one day in seven is not separated to God by a rest from the usual labours of life, and a dedication to his service, religion is in a very decaying state, and in great danger to be lost. As it is a common confession of persons who fall into the vilest crimes, and are executed by the public justice of the magistrate, that their disregard of the sabbath was the beginning of their guilt and ruin, and led the way to all iniquity; so a careful observation of one day in seven for religious purposes has been the great spring and support of virtue and piety amongst mankind, and the constant guardian of it in its purity and power.

Now if all these considerations put together will but go so far as to make it highly probable, that one day in seven has been always the proportion of time which God has appointed for a sabbath, that is, for rest from labour and divine worship, this probability as to the time and manner of a duty should go for evidence, where no further evidence can be procured, and where the duty itself is clear and certain: And since some rest from labour, and some seasons for worship are necessary, we cannot do a more reasonable thing than to separate that proportion of time which the wisdom of God has certainly separated in some of his dispensations to men, and most probably in all of them. Before we proceed it will be necessary to answer a few enquiries.

Question I. "Why was the first day of the seven appointed for christian worship rather than any of the others?"

Answer. When God rested from his work of creation, he appointed the seventh day for the ancient sabbath, to keep in mind the Creator of the world and his work; and so when Christ rested from his works of redemption, he appointed the first day, even the day in which he arose from the grave, as most proper to keep the great work of our redemption in memory. That the first day of the week was observed by the apostles and first christians in honour of the resurrection of Christ, and the finishing of their redemption, is evident from several hints of scripture, and many plain expressions in the history of the primitive church.*

* There have been some very great and learned men who suppose that the apostle Paul, in the fourth chapter to the Hebrews, builds a christian sabbath on this principle. See verse 4. *He spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.* Verse 7. Again, *he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.* For if Jesus, that is, Joshua, had given them rest, that is, if he had given them all that complete rest in the land of Canaan which was typified by the Jewish

I might add here also, that as the redemption or rest from Egyptian bondage, given them by God and Moses, is mentioned in *Deut.* v. 15. as one reason of the Jewish sabbath; so our greater redemption by Christ, or rest from the bondage of sin and Satan, being on this day completed, seems by parallel reasoning to be a proper argument for observing the christian sabbath. Besides, it is worthy of our notice, that by choosing the first day of the seven for a sabbath, after the seventh day was abolished, there remains still one day in seven to perpetuate the memory of the creation, and it is the first day of the seven to perpetuate the memory of the work of redemption. Thus our Lord's Day includes both.

Question II. "But what need is there of a whole day devoted to this purpose under the New Testament? Is it not enough to perform christian worship in public assemblies, and thereby answer the purposes of the day, without observing that day as a sabbath, or day of rest?" I answer,

Answer. It is too evident an observation, that unless the whole day be separated from the business and pleasures of this life, the hours and minutes of worship will, for the most part, be but poorly improved, and become much less profitable to our spiritual interest. It is hardly possible to attain the best ends of preaching and hearing, praying and praising, administering and receiving of the Lord's Supper, if we come into the sanctuary with our heads and hearts full of the affairs of this life, and all our earthly cares buzzing about our souls. And how much less good will a sermon do us, if, as soon as the hour of worship is ended, we run immediately from God, and plunge ourselves into worldly affairs, without giving our thoughts leisure and leave to reflect on what we have heard? And much worse would it be still for religion, if we spent the rest of the day in recreations and sports, for these carnalize the spirit, and estrange it from God and things heavenly much more than the common labours of life.

Alas! how difficult a matter do we find it to disengage our thoughts from this world, when we come into the presence of God, even though we have a day appointed for this purpose? How hard it is to shake off all the dust of this earth when we would arise to God in devotion? And though we have bid farewel to our secular concerns the night before, and have had a long interval of sleep to divide our thoughts from this vain and busy life, yet how do the weighty cares of it hang continually upon our spirits, or the trifles and amusements of it hover and play about our souls, and divert our hearts from the exercise of godliness? And let us think with ourselves, how much harder it would be to fulfil the duties of the sanctuary with any good success, to improve public worship to our further acquaintance with God and things heavenly, to our greater delight in him, our mortification of sin, and our growth in holiness, if there were no time devoted to religion but only that hour or two while we are at church? How would the words of the preacher run off from our souls, like a stream of oil gliding over a marble, if there were no recollection to fix it in our memory? How easily would Satan pluck up the good seed that was sown in the heart, if we join to assist him, by giving a loose immediately to the

sabbath, then he would not afterwards have spoken of another day. *There remaineth therefore a rest*, or "*sabbatism*," as the Greek word is, *there remaineth the keeping of a sabbath to the people of God; for he that is entered into his rest*, which they refer to Jesus Christ in the work of redemption, he *hath also ceased or rested from his own works, as God did from his.* See Doctor Owen, in his "Treatise on the Sabbath." Thus the Son of God, the Redeemer, is supposed to have appointed a day or sabbath to celebrate his rest from his labours and sufferings, as God, the Father, the Creator, did when he rested from his works.

cares or delights of this life, and call them to break in upon us when the sermon is ended? We may reasonably conclude, if Christ appointed the first day of the week for a season of the worship of God, he appointed it also to be a season of rest from the cares and labours of this life, that this worship might be better performed, and the great ends of it best secured.

Question III. "When must the christian begin his sabbath, or the Lord's Day, how must it be spent, and when must it end?" Here I answer,

Answer. That whatsoever is the usual and customary beginning and ending of the days of common labour and business in the nation where we live, such should be the beginning and ending of the Lord's Day, or day of rest. The one day of rest answers to the six days of labour in the words of the fourth command, and must begin and end like them.

The Jews began their day at the evening or setting sun, and it ended the next evening. The nations of Europe where we dwell begin and end the day at twelve o'clock at midnight. But as the design of rest and worship on the Lord's Day is to bear a proportion of one in seven to the business and labours of life on the other six days, we may reasonably suppose that the command never requires any thing more, than that the same hours be spent at home or abroad, in public or private, for the general purposes of religion upon the Lord's Day, which are spent in the common affairs of life on other days; and consequently that the time which is devoted to eating, and sleeping, and the necessities of nature, and short intervals of refreshment on other days, may be employed to the same purposes on this day also. Public worship seems to be the chief design of the day; but when we are not engaged in public worship we need not be, and indeed we ought not to be, idle, but we should employ ourselves, as far as health and other circumstances will allow, in reading or hearing divine things at home, in prayer, singing psalms, alone or in families, in meditation, in holy conferences, or any of those actions which have a more direct and immediate tendency to the knowledge and worship of God, to the improvement of religion and virtue, and to our preparation for the everlasting rest and worship of heaven.

Question IV. "May we not labour or work on the Lord's Day to preserve ourselves from imminent dangers or threatening calamities, or to do good to the miserable or the helpless, ?" &c. I answer,

Answer. That works of necessity and of mercy were not excluded on this day, even under the rigours of Judaism, where rest seems to be the primary or most obvious design of the sabbath; and much less should those necessary and merciful works be excluded in the christian dispensation, where the chief design is not bodily rest, but worship; such works, I mean, as leading cattle to drink, giving them fodder, sailing a ship, quenching a fire, stopping inundations of water, defending a town or city that is invaded by enemies, resisting an assault, raising cattle out of a pit whereinto they are fallen, relieving the distressed, nursing the sick, and taking care of children. In short, there is nothing of this kind forbidden, even though it may, in a great measure, sometimes hinder the proper work of the day, which is religion and worship; for *God will have mercy, and not sacrifice;* Matt. xii. 1—7. *Jesus healed the sick on the sabbath;* verses 10—13. and his *disciples rubbed out the corn from the ears when they were hungry;* Mark ii. 23—28. and though the Pharisees reproved them, yet the Lord pronounced them blameless. *The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath;* Luke vi. 1—11. John v. 8, 9.

Even the infirm man who was healed, was ordered by our Saviour *to take up his bed and walk*, verses 10—12. as a proof of his cure. *The Son of God is Lord of the sabbath;* Mark ii. 27, 28. and he still more abates the severities of it when the Jewish dispensation is finished.

Under the New Testament we have no such strict and severe prohibitions of every care and labour in the common returns of the Lord's Day, where they do not interfere with the primary design of it, that is, the worship of God, and our best improvement thereby. As I would not bind new burdens on the servants of Christ, so neither would I release what Christ has bound. And therefore I say, where the necessary labours of a few in some part of the Lord's Day, by providing food and other conveniences of life, render many more persons capable of spending the day in religion, I cannot find that the New Testament forbids it. I say, in some part of the Lord's Day, for I think none ought to be so constantly employed in secular affairs as to exclude the whole day from its proper business, that is, religion or devotion, unless in the cases of necessity before mentioned. I think it may be maintained in general, that as whatsoever tends to destroy or nullify the great designs of religious worship, should be omitted on the Lord's Day, so some lesser labours, which tend to make the performances of religion more easy, cheerful, and regular to ourselves, and to great numbers of others, may safely be performed on this day without a sinful violation of it. But wheresoever the conscience is doubtful, it is best to choose the safer side. *Happy is he that condemneth not himself in what he alloweth;* Rom. xiv. 22.

And I would take leave to add here also, that as it is a day of sacred rest and refreshment, we are not called to draw out the duties of worship to such unreasonable and tiresome lengths, nor to be so incessant and uninterrupted in works of religion on this day, as would overmuch fatigue the spirits, and overpress animal nature. This does not tend to the edification of men, or the honour of God; but it has a certain and evident tendency to prejudice younger persons against the observation of the Lord's Day, if we render the services of it too irksome and tedious. According as our constitution is more or less healthy, or our circumstances in the world, as servants or masters, as poor or rich, call us more or less to necessary works on this day, so we are to employ ourselves in the affairs of religion at such hours, and with such intervals of release and refreshment, as that the sabbath of the Lord may be a pleasure to us, and may not overtire feeble nature instead of giving it rest. We should all employ this day to the designs and ends appointed, to the honour of God and our risen Saviour, not with Jewish rigours and superstitious abstinences; not in indulgences of the flesh and lazy idleness; not in sports and pastime; but with christian wisdom improve our time for religious purposes, according to our capacities and stations, knowing that we are in a state of gospel liberty, freed from a state and spirit of bondage, and rejoicing in the Lord our Deliverer and Saviour.

This leads me to some practical exhortations.

I. "Delight in the Lord's Day as a high privilege bestowed upon you: make it the matter of your holy joy." Give thanks to God your Creator, who has not suffered you to wear out all your time in the drudgeries of this world, and the cares and toils of a mortal state, but has appointed one day in seven for your release from the business of earth, and your employment in the work of heaven. Give thanks to Jesus your Re-

deemer, who on this day finished the work of your redemption, and arose from the dead; and as those which are *risen with Christ, set your affections on the things that are above, where Christ is at the right-hand of God;* Col. iii. 1, 2. *This is the day which the Lord has made, we will be glad and rejoice therein;* Psalm cxviii. 24. Bless his holy name, that he has appointed christians to assemble themselves together for divine and heavenly purposes on this day; and be not the last in those assemblies, because if you are frequently so, it looks as if you had no mind to attend upon them at all.

Give thanks again to God the Creator and Governor of the world, who has fixed your birth and habitation in a land wherein the Lord's Day is observed, and wherein there are laws to guard the observance of it; so that you are not disturbed and hindered by the sons of wickedness in the practices of religion on this day. This is a distinguishing favour which you enjoy above the christians of the primitive ages who dwelt under heathen princes, where they had much ado to observe any sabbath, or to employ the Lord's Day in religious practices, while the whole nation around them was engaged, either in the busy affairs of this mortal life, or in vile idolatry and superstition.

Do not say, concerning the duties of worship on this day, as the Jewish hypocrites did in the days of the prophets Amos and Malachi, *Behold, what a weariness is it? and when will the sabbath be gone, that we may set forth wheat and sell corn?* Mal. i. 13. Amos viii. 5. Do not so much enquire, what earthly business may I do on this day without sin, as what is there I can omit till to-morrow? What worldly business can I be excused from doing on God's holy day? This will discover a truly religious temper indeed, and shew that you delight in the things of God more than in things carnal or earthly.

II. "Dispose of your earthly affairs wisely in the foregoing week, so that, if possible, you may not have the Lord's Day, which is a day of rest and worship, invaded and intrenched upon by the cares and business of this world." Endeavour to quit yourselves of them so early the foregoing evening, that they may not cut short your hours of sleep that night, and thereby render you listless and drowsy upon the day appointed for worship. There is a great deal of christian prudence and discretion to be seen in such a disposal of our worldly businesses, as may give us full leisure for God and heavenly things upon the Lord's Day; that when our thoughts are rising up to our risen and ascended Saviour, we may not feel the cares of life hang about them like so many clogs and chains to drag us downwards, and divide our hearts from God and our Saviour again.

III. "Think of the promises which are made to those who, with a religious care, serve and worship God upon his appointed day." There are some very gracious words of this kind spoken to the Jews, and may with equal justice be applied to those who observe the day of God's appointed rest, for the spiritual purposes of it under every dispensation. Isaiah lvi. 1—7. *Thus saith the Lord, keep ye judgment and do justice, for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed;* which words have a plain reference to the gospel state. *Blessed is the man—that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it;—the sons of the stranger who join themselves to the Lord to serve him and to love his name, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant, I will bring them to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their sacrifices shall be accepted upon my altar: I will give them in my house, and within my walls, a place and a name better than that of sons and daughters.* And in chapter lviii. of the same prophecy, and verses 13, 14. *If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy*

pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord honourable, and shalt honour him, not doing thy own ways, nor finding thy own pleasure, nor speaking thy own words, then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. And there has been a multitude of instances, even under the gospel, wherein the blessings of the upper and the lower world have been plentifully poured in upon those who have observed the day of the Lord, and spent it to the sacred purposes for which it was designed. Their basket and their store has been sensibly enlarged and increased by a divine blessing, and their souls have received much of the dew of heaven, have brought forth abundant fruits of holiness, and been fitted in an eminent degree for the business and blessedness of the upper world. Our famous English judge, Sir Matthew Hale, has left it upon record as his own experience.

IV. "Whatsoever spiritual advantages or improvements you obtain on God's own day, take care that you do not lose them again amidst the labours or the pleasures of the following week." 2 John 8. *Look to yourselves, that ye lose not the things which we have wrought,* that is, that ministers may not lose their labours in preaching, nor the disciples lose theirs in hearing. Treasure up something on every christian sabbath that may add to your spiritual riches, your knowledge, your faith, your zeal, your hope. It is a day appointed for the enriching of your souls; let not the cares of the world bury those treasures, or rob you of them. Take large steps towards the heavenly world on that day, and see that you be not drawn back again by the allurements or the toils of this mortal state. Maintain that savour and relish of divine things, that holy nearness to God and heaven, as far as possible amidst the business of life, which you have gained amidst the ordinances of the sanctuary. Thus you will have a sort of sanctification spread over all your earthly affairs, and you will walk with God in them all.

V. "Take notice what relish and satisfaction you find in the duties or services of the Lord's Day, and let that be a test whereby you may judge of the sanctification of your souls, and your preparation for heaven." I grant, those who are fatigued and overpressed with the labours of this life, may be well pleased with a day of rest from labour, from mere principles of nature, and the desire of ease or idleness: But do they love the work of a Lord's Day? Do they delight in christian worship? Do they rejoice to remember a risen Saviour? Do they take pleasure in the remembrance of God in his glorious works of creation and redemption, and converse with him with a holy satisfaction in prayer, in praise, and other religious exercises? Let us enquire, my friends, how it stands with us in this respect. Are we glad of a day of rest and release from the business of this life, that we may be more at leisure for God? Or could we be well enough pleased if there were no sabbaths? Are the ordinances of worship our delight? Do we take pleasure in devotion and practical godliness? Do the things of inward religion relish well with us? Are they our pleasure and our joy?

What shall we do in heaven if we are not possessed of this temper, if our spirits are neither suited to the blessedness nor business of it; and if this world, with the cares and pleasures of it, be our chief delight? And how can we expect to be ever fit for heaven, which is a state of everlasting separation from the businesses of this world, and the perpetual enjoyment of God, and Jesus the Saviour, if we do not make some advances towards this temper on every Lord's Day that returns, which separates us from the world, and is designed to bring us toward God?

In the last place, I would add, "Let every Lord's Day, every christian sabbath, lead your meditations, your faith and hope, onward to the eternal rest in heaven, and the glorious worship of that world." Amidst all the fatigues and cares of this life, amidst all the interruptions you feel in your devotions here, and the inroads that are made upon your religious employments and joys, even on God's own day, yet still rejoice in the view and hope of that state where you shall find everlasting rest, a sabbath which never ends, and be for ever employed in divine exercises without the weariness of flesh or spirit. Alas! how soon are our souls tired here, or rather our animal natures, with spiritual exercises? How dull and drowsy is this flesh of ours? How do we feel our hearts ever wandering from our God and his worship? But there you shall behold the great God with a steady fixation of soul on him, even that God who created all things in six days, and shall give him the honour of that creation in an immortal sabbath. There you shall see the blessed Jesus, who rose from the dead on the first christian sabbath, who fulfilled his work of redeeming you from worse than Egyptian bondage, and laid the foundation of the new creation, even of new heavens and of a new earth. There you shall find complete and perpetual rest from all that is sinful, and all that is painful; you shall enjoy a day of glorious and blissful worship, in communion with the holy and happy inhabitants of that world, and it must be an everlasting day, for *there is no night there*; Rev. xxii. 5.

SERMON LI.

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

MATT. xxviii. 19.

GO YE THEREFORE AND TEACH ALL NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY GHOST.

IN all the religions which God has prescribed to mankind, there have ever been some outward rites or ceremonies appointed for man to perform, whereby God would represent the blessings of his own grace, and whereby men might profess their humble acceptance of those blessings, and their own correspondent obligations to duty. These are a sort of seals of the covenant of grace between God and man: Such were sacrifices, which we have good reason to believe were appointed to Adam just after his fall, when the Lord God made them coats of the skins of beasts which were sacrificed: Such was the rite of circumcision given to Abraham and his children: Such were the numerous trains of ceremonies or ordinances which were prescribed to the Jews by the hand of Moses, wherein, by many offerings made by fire, by washings and sprinklings of water and of blood, the blessings of the covenant of grace were described in a sort of emblem, or typical language; and the people gave up themselves to the Lord in a way of covenant, according to the several appointed rules of duty.

In the religion or gospel of Christ, there are but two ordinances of this kind, instituted for christians to observe, that is, Baptism which is performed by water; and the Lord's Supper, which is celebrated by bread and wine. The institution of baptism is contained in the words of my text, "Go ye and teach all nations, or make disciples of them, as it is in the Greek, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: and I am with you to authorize this practise, and to bless you therein, even to the end of the world." The Lord's Supper is represented in 1 Cor. xi. 26. *As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye shew forth the Lord's death till he come.* Thus it appears that both of them are to continue till the Redeemer comes the second time, and puts an end to this world.

Baptism is my present subject, and in order to give you a brief sketch of it, I shall set the most important parts thereof before you in this plain easy method, as I think they may be derived from scripture.

I. I shall consider what this ordinance of baptism is, and what it doth imply or signify.

II. Who are the persons to whom it is to be administered.

III. In what manner this ceremony is to be performed.

IV. What practical inferences or exhortations may be drawn from this subject.

First. "What is baptism, and what is implied in it, or intended by it?" The ordinance itself, that is, christian baptism, is the washing a person with water, *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* When it was introduced by John the

baptist, it was but imperfect, and therefore it was repeated in the name of Christ to the Ephesians, who had received the baptism of John before; *Acts* xix. 3—5. And even as our Lord himself practised it in the days of his personal ministry, it did not seem to be drawn out into its complete form: John baptized his disciples, pointing their faith to Jesus, who should come after him: Jesus might possibly baptize into his own name as a great prophet, but not under the character of the Messiah, since he kept that point very much concealed from his common followers or disciples in his lifetime. However, all that was done both under the ministry of Christ, and of John the baptist, seem to be continued and included in this most perfect form of baptism, which our Lord appointed to his apostles after his resurrection from the dead, and just before his ascent to heaven. Whatsoever I find therefore in the baptism of John, as well as of Christ himself, or his apostles, I may reasonably presume are contained also in the outward form, and in the spiritual signification of christian baptism.

Let us consider now, "What doth this baptism, this washing with water, mean and imply in a spiritual sense." And under most of the following particulars, I shall endeavour to shew what is the use of the sacred names of Father, Son, and Spirit, in this ordinance.

I. "Christian baptism implies an humble acknowledgment of some defilement; otherwise there would be no need of washing." Sin is often represented in scripture as a matter of uncleanness, which pollutes the soul, and this it doth two ways. *First*, The principle of sin within us defaces the image of God, which was stamped on man in his first creation, and thereby it renders us unfit for the presence of God, and communion with him as he is a God of spotless holiness: And, *secondly*, The guilt of our actual sins exposes us to his punishing justice on account of the breach of his law, for every sin is a transgression of the law of God, and deserves death. Whosoever therefore is baptized, doth profess and declare that he is a defiled creature, a sinner; that he is guilty in the sight of God, and lies exposed to his anger; that he is unfit to converse with him, or to stand before him. So the Jews who attended on the ministry of John, *Matt.* iii. 6. *were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins:* and therefore they came to the water seeking to be purified. The foundation of our hope and salvation is laid in the acknowledgment of our misery. This acknowledgment is eminently made to God the Father, as sustaining the character of supreme Governor of the world, whom we have offended by sin.

II. "Baptism implies a belief of the blessed provision which God hath made in his gospel for the purification of our souls from sin, and all its defilements."

1. "He provided for the removal of the guilt of sin;" for he sent his own Son Jesus Christ to take flesh and blood upon him, that he might die to make atonement for the sins of men, and that God, without dishonour to his governing justice, might pardon repenting sinners. This is sometimes called in scripture, *washing away our sins by the blood of Christ;* 1 John i. 7. Rev. i. 5. And for this reason the blood of Christ is called the *blood of sprinkling*; Heb. xii. 24. Now this is particularly applied to baptism; *Acts* xxii. 16. *Ananias said to Paul, arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord Jesus.* Therefore baptism is called the *baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;* Mark i. 4.

2. "God hath also provided for the removal of the principle of sin, which defiles the soul of man, by the persuasive arguments of his gospel, which was revealed by the

Spirit of God, and by the powerful operations of this Spirit on his heart." It is the Spirit of God who is appointed to work on the dark and sinful mind of man, to change his corrupt nature, enlighten his mind, and give him a new bent and bias toward holiness. This is called *renewing us by his Spirit, regenerating us, or causing us to be born again by the Spirit, giving us a new heart and a new spirit, sprinkling clean water upon us, and making us clean, and pouring out his Spirit upon men, and their seed;* John iii. 3, 6. Ezek. xxxvi. 35. Isa. xliv. 3. This also is in scripture applied to the ordinance of baptism, and therefore we are said to *be born of water, and of the Spirit;* John iii. 5. And the *washing of regeneration* is explained by *the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly;* Tit. iii. 5, 6.

But here I would stay to observe, that though both the ceremonies of the gospel, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, do in some sort represent both these methods of purification from sin, that is, by the atoning blood of Christ, and by his sanctifying Spirit: yet the Lord's Supper more expressly represents the death and blood of Christ, and so more naturally and properly shews forth our pardon and justification from the guilt of sin by the atonement which Christ hath made; whereas it is the more peculiar office of baptism to represent our regeneration or sanctification by the Spirit of God, or the cleansing our natures from the power and principle of sin, by pouring the Holy Spirit upon us under the emblem of water; by which emblem, in scripture, the Spirit of God is often exhibited to us.

However, in general it is to be acknowledged, that christian baptism, in the completeness of it, implies a belief of both these blessings, even these provisions of God the Father, for the cleansing us both from the guilt and from the principle of sin by the blood of Christ, and the operation of his Spirit: And I take this to be one reason why we are baptized in the name of the Father, as the author of these blessings, and of the Son and Spirit, as divine mediums to procure and convey them.

3. The next thing implied in christian baptism, is a " humble acceptance of these blessings in the method of God's own appointment; that is, by repentance for sin in the sight of God, by faith in Jesus Christ his Son, and by seeking the influences of the Holy Spirit, and obeying them." When we come under this ordinance, we do as it were, by way of action and emblem, consent to accept of this purification, both from the guilt and principle of sin; we repent and are ashamed of our past iniquities; we trust in Jesus Christ and his atonement for pardon; we declare our desire to become new and holy creatures, by the cleansing and purifying power of the Spirit of God in the gospel; and therefore when persons professed their belief in Christ, and repentance of their sins, they were baptized; and those who were sincere were inwardly cleansed from their defilements, and received both these blessings. See 1 *Cor.* vi. 11. when the apostle had been reckoning up many vile pollutions of the inhabitants of Corinth before their conversion, *and such were some of you,* saith he, *but ye are washed* in baptism, as a token and seal that *you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and sanctified by the Spirit of our God.* Faith and repentance were the great things required of those who were admitted to baptism: This was the practice of John, this the practice of the apostles in the history of their ministry. Did John the forerunner of Christ preach *the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins?* Matt. iii. 2, 8. so St. Peter, Acts ii. 38, *Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins.* Did

John call them to *believe in Jesus who should come after him?* Acts xix. 4. So Philip the evangelist saith to the eunuch, *If thou believest with all thy heart,* that is, *in Jesus as the Son of God, thou mayest be baptized;* Acts viii. 37. He answered, *I believe; and Philip baptized him.*

And here the sacred names of Father, Son, and Spirit, are of great use and importance again. When we are baptized into the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit, we do humbly accept of God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as our Father and our God; we accept of the Son of God as our Saviour, especially by the blood of his sacrifice, and of the Holy Spirit as our Sanctifier by his gospel, and his powerful influences.

4. Baptism implies also, by necessary consequence, a " profession of our obligation to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and our engagement to act consistently with this solemnity;" that is, to live agreeably to these favours we receive from God, *viz.* the pardon of our sins and the sanctification of our souls; to watch against sin for time to come; to abstain from all pollutions of flesh and spirit: for we are not washed by the blood and Spirit of Christ that we may defile ourselves again. We engage to carry on the work of repentance and mortification of sin all our lives, as well as to live upon Christ by faith for the remission of daily rising transgressions. In short, it includes a holy resolution, through the grace of Christ, and by the aids of his Spirit, to follow every other means which God hath appointed for the rooting out of sin, with all its defilements from the soul, and restoring us to purity and holiness, and the likeness of God. Thus baptism becomes a seal of the covenant of grace between God and men, an acceptance of his blessings, and engagement to their correspondent duties, even as circumcision was to Abraham, *a seal of his justification by faith;* Rom. iv. 11. and an eminent proof and assurance of his obedience. Persons who desire baptism, and yet will not take these obligations upon them, have no claim to this ordinance; and therefore John drove away the scribes and pharisees from this baptism, because they would not *bring forth fruits meet for repentance;* Matt. iii. 7—9.

5. Baptism being significant of all these blessings and these duties, " it becomes the appointed ceremony and sign of professing the whole christian religion, and the rite or form of entering into the visible church of Christ." Those who are baptized are professed christians; they are avowed disciples of Christ. And herein also the sacred names of Father, Son, and Spirit, have their proper, plain significancy. Baptism is a profession of the religion which was contrived by the wisdom and grace of God the Father, it was published and preached to the world by Jesus Christ his Son, and it was confirmed and established by the miraculous gifts and operations of the Holy Spirit. It implies also a resolved obedience to the authority and commands of the Father, a professed belief of the gospel as taught us by the Son, with a dependance on the grace and salvation of Christ, as carried on by all his offices of Prophet, Priest, and King, together with a compliance with all the outward discoveries, and all inward influences of the Holy Spirit: This is the duty, and these are the engagements of every professor of christianity. As circumcision was the mode of entrance into the Jewish church, and becoming a professed disciple of Moses, and hereby an obligation arose to perform and practise the whole Jewish law, *Gal.* v. 3. so by baptism we lay ourselves under a holy obligation to practise the whole religion of Christ, and to wait for all its promised blessings. We hope for the love and grace of the Father, the salvation of Jesus Christ,

his Son, and the sanctifying and comforting influences of the Holy Ghost; and we are hereby devoted to the service and honour of the blessed Trinity, God the Father, the Son, and the Spirit; whose adorable unity, in respect to the godhead, and whose three distinctions, in respect of their personal characters, have been set before you at large in a former sermon on this same text.

Having said thus much in describing the ceremony itself, and what is the spiritual meaning of it, we come now in the second place to enquire,

Who are the subjects of this ordinance of baptism, or to whom it is to be administered?

To this I answer, The first, the most proper, or at least the most evident subjects of it, are persons who confess their sins, and profess to repent of them, and who accept of this grace and salvation offered in the gospel: Those who have been taught the chief doctrines and duties of the gospel of Christ, and profess to believe and receive them, and to comply with them: Those who take upon them the religion of Christ, become his disciples, and give up their names to him. Here is no difference, whether Greek or Jew, whether male or female, as there was in the Jewish ceremony of circumcision, which belonged properly to the Jewish nation, and admitted none but males: but all professors of the gospel must receive this ceremony, and be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and this is the most common account the New Testament gives us of this matter, that when persons professed their faith in Christ, they were baptized. Texts of this kind need not be cited, they are so numerous.

But in the christian church, from its early ages, and we think from the apostles' time, it hath been the custom also to baptize the infant children of professed christians; and though there be no such express and plain commands or examples of it written in scripture, as we might have expected, yet there are several inferences to be drawn from what is written, which afford a just and reasonable encouragement to this practice, and guard it from the censure of superstition and will-worship. This has been a long and troublesome dispute indeed among the churches since the reformation: I shall not pretend to debate it here, but only rehearse a few hints of argument, which are commonly used to vindicate the practice of baptizing children, *viz.*

1. That ever since God called the family of Abraham, and settled his visible church in it, he has never suffered it to fail. It was an *everlasting covenant that he made with Abraham, to be his God, and the God of his seed,* Gen. xvii. 7, 8. *that he might be the Father both of* Jews and Gentiles, who were brought into the church, as in *Rom.* iv. 11, 16.

2. The Jewish and the christian church are but one and the same visible church in a continued succession, though under different administrations and ordinances. The same spiritual promises and blessings which belonged to the church under the Old Testament, belong also to it under the New; *Acts* ii. 39. 2 *Cor.* i. 20. Abraham is represented as *the root or stock of the visible church;* Rom. xi. 16, 17, &c. *The Jewish church are the natural branches of it, the gentiles are ingrafted into the same stock,* verses 17, 24. *and partake of the blessings of it.*

3. The children of the Jews were visible members of the Jewish church under the covenant of Abraham, and as such they were recognized, acknowledged and received into it by circumcision, as the door of entrance: Now circumcision was a seal in general, both of spiritual blessings, and outward privileges; *Rom.* iv. 11. A seal of the righte-

ousness of faith, as well as of the possession of Canaan, and of the covenant of grace, as well as of the covenant of Sinai.

4. The children of christians were never cut off from this privilege, when the fathers were received into the church, whether they were Jews or gentiles; and therefore they are to be reckoned at least a sort of incomplete members of the christian church also, under spiritual promises and blessings. When the Jews, the natural branches, were cut off from the good olive tree, their little buds were cut off with them also; and when the gentiles, by a profession of faith, were grafted in as foreign branches, their little buds were grafted in with them. Christ received the children that were brought by the hands of their believing parents, and *laid his hands on them, and blessed them, and said, of such is the kingdom of heaven;* Matt. x. 13—16. The promises of the Old Testament, wherein children are included in some of the prophets, do refer to the gentile church as well as the Jewish; *Isaiah* xliv. 3, 5. lxv. 23. *Joel* ii. 28. 29. For it is the *blessing of Abraham, which reaches to his seed, that comes upon the gentiles through Jesus Christ;* Gal. iii. 14. Rom. xv. 8, 9. *that the gentiles may glorify God for his mercy.*

5. As this sort of reasoning seems to manifest the right of the children of christians to these blessings, or that they have some interest in this covenant, so there are some considerations which render it very probable, that children should be admitted into the visible church by the christian door of entrance, that is baptism. As for instance,

First, That circumcision being abolished, and baptism coming in the room of it, baptism should be applied to all those who have any interest in the covenant, as circumcision was. Now that baptism is come in the room of circumcision, seems plain from *Col.* ii. 12. where the apostle argues, *that being baptized we need not be circumcised:* And besides, baptism and circumcision signify the same thing, that is, the removal of sin, one by cutting off, and the other by washing away.

Again, The gospel, which is a dispensation of greater grace, does not lessen, but increase the privileges of the church: It takes away yokes and burdens indeed, such as circumcision was, *Acts* xv. 10. but does not diminish its honours, titles and privileges.

Yet further, when the father or mother of a family believed in Christ, their households were baptised together with themselves, even where there is no mention that the household believed in Christ also: As in the case of Lydia and Stephanas; *Acts* xvi. 15. 1 *Cor.* i. 16. Now children are usually a considerable part of the household.

In the last place, Children under the New Testament are as capable of receiving the blessings signified, and fulfilling the duties enjoined, as ever they were under the Old. It is granted indeed, they neither could then, nor can now, understand the blessings nor the duties; yet they might receive the seal of circumcision or of baptism, as a bond laid upon them in infancy, to fulfil the obligations and the duties at riper years, and as an encouragement to wait and hope for the blessings. This was the case of jewish infants, and why may not christians be favoured with it also?

I proceed now to the third general enquiry, *viz.* "What is the manner of performing this ceremony?" which also I shall dispatch in a brief hint or two. The Greek word "baptizo" signifies to "*wash*" any thing, properly by water coming over it: Now there are several ways of such washing, *viz.* sprinkling water on it in small quantity, pouring water on it in larger quantity, or dipping it under water, either in part or in whole: And since this seems to be left undetermined in scripture to one particular mode, therefore any of these ways of washing may be sufficient to answer the purpose of this ordinance.

Now that the Greek word signifies "*washing*" a thing in general by water coming over it, and not always "*dipping*" is argued by learned men, not only from ancient Greek authors, but from the New Testament itself: as *Luke* xi. 38. *The pharisees marvelled that Jesus had not first washed before dinner;* in Greek, that he was not first baptized; and can it be supposed, that they would have had him dip himself in water; Mark vii. 4. *The pharisees when they come from the market, eat not except they are washed,* that is, baptized; surely it cannot mean, except they were dipped: And if this should be restrained to signify washing their hands only, yet it does not necessarily signify dipping them; for the manner of washing their hands of old was by pouring water on them; as *Elisha poured water on the hands of Elijah;* 2 Kings iii. 11. Yet further, they practised the washing of tables, in Greek, of beds, as well as cups and vessels. Now beds could not usually be washed by dipping. *Heb.* ix. 10. The Jews had *divers washings* prescribed by Moses, in Greek *baptisms,* which were sprinkling and pouring water on things, as well as plunging them all over in water. 1 *Cor.* x. 2. The children of Israel were baptized unto Moses *in the cloud and the sea,* in their passage through the Red Sea at the march from Egypt; not that they were dipped in the water, but they were sprinkled by the clouds over their heads, and perhaps by the water which stood up in heaps as they passed by.

Besides, it is said further on this head, that pouring or sprinkling more naturally represents most of the spiritual blessings signified by baptism, *viz.* the sprinkling of the blood of Christ on the conscience, or the pouring out the Spirit on the person baptized, or sprinkling him with clean water, as an emblem of the influence of the Spirit; all which are the things signified in baptism, as different representations of the cleansing away of the guilt or defilement of sin thereby.

But this shall suffice for a hint of this controversy, which has filled large volumes in the world, made a huge noise in the church, and destroyed the charity of a multitude of christians. Since I do not here profess to enter into the argument, but only to give a few short notices or rehearsals of what is said in our vindication, who practise the baptism of infants by sprinkling water on them, I do the rather ask leave to speak one charitable word on this subject, *viz.* that since this controversy has considerable difficulties attending it, persons of an honest and sincere soul in searching out the truth, may happen to run into different opinions: And the things wherein we agree are so important, as should not suffer us to quarrel about the lesser things wherein we differ. Our brethren who reject infant baptism, as well as we who practise it, all agree in a belief of the sacred institution of this ordinance, and in our reverence for it: We all agree that the children should be devoted to God, and should be partakers of all the utmost privileges into which scripture admits them, and that they should grow up under all possible obligations to duty; and since each of us desires to find out the will of Christ, and practise it accordingly, it is a most unreasonable thing, that we should be angry with each other, because some of us are devoted to God and Christ by this ceremony a little sooner, or a little later than others; or because some devote their children to God in baptism as a claim of privileges and an obligation to duties, before they can do this for themselves; whereas others let this claim and obligation alone, till children themselves are capable of acting therein: Or because some of us think this ordinance requires much water, and that the whole body be immersed in it, others suppose a little is sufficient, and that he who hath the face or head washed in this solemnity, has as true a significancy of gospel benefits and obligations, as he who has his whole body put under water, since our Saviovr thought.

so when he *washed Peter's feet;* John xiii. 10. In short, where faith in Christ, and love to God, and obedience to the sanctifying operations of the Spirit, are made necessary to salvation, and agreed upon by us all, it is pity that these lesser things should raise such unhappy and scandalous contentions among the disciples of the blessed Jesus, who is *the Prince of Peace.*

Having given you some account of the subjects of this ordinance, and the manner of performance, I cannot finish this head without adding, that since every thing under the New Testament is sanctified by the word and prayer, it is generally most proper to administer this ordinance, with a word of exhortation or instruction to men, and a prayer lifted up to God in the name of Christ, that the blessings of grace may accompany this ordinance, that it may not be a vain or empty sign, but may be attended with special and divine graces. I come now to the last thing which I proposed, and that is to mention a few practical exhortations relating to the point in hand.

Exhortation I. "Adore the wisdom of God, and give thanks to his goodness, who hath appointed such sensible helps to our faith, such sensible memorials of his grace and our duty." True religion is in a great measure an inward and spiritual thing; but it is of vast importance towards the preservation of any particular religion in the world, to have some of the most considerable points of it held forth or represented in visible ceremonies, to strike the senses of men, and to dwell upon their imagination. The God of nature knows our frame, how much we are touched and affected with things sensible, and therefore he hath condescended to deal with us in this manner in all ages of his church; and upon this account the two chief blessings of the New Testament, *viz.* cleansing from the defiling principles of sin by the Holy Spirit, and washing from the guilt of sin by the blood of Christ, are held forth to our senses in the two great ordinances of the gospel, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Words and discourses, precepts and promises, given out by the lips of men, oftentimes vanish into the air, and are lost and forgotten: Writings are preserved indeed, but all men are not learned, nor know letters; and though our age be blessed with so much knowledge, yet multitudes in all former ages could not so much as read. But these sensible emblems and ceremonies preserve the articles of our holy religion in the blessings and in the duties of it from age to age, and write them upon the memory of the unlearned, and that in lasting characters. Blessed be God for his condescending goodness in such an evangelical ceremony!

II. "Let us enquire into the spiritual meaning of all christian ordinances, and never content ourselves with the mere outward forms without enjoying the blessing signified thereby, and practising the respective duties." Children should enquire of their parents when they see a child washed with water, and say, "What is the meaning of this washing? And what are we to understand by the use of these names, *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?*" And parents should be able and willing to instruct their children, and teach them these important points of their holy religion, *viz.* that they are under a defilement by sin, they are to be washed from the guilt of it in the blood of Christ, and to be cleansed and purified from the principles of it by the renewing grace of the Spirit. So it was among the Jews; Exod. xii. 26, 27. *And when your children shall say unto you, what mean you by this service, then ye shall say, it is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when he smote the Egyptians:* and thus should it be among christians. But remember, that washing with water in never so solemn a manner, and using these sacred names with never so great seriousness by the

minister, doth not profit the persons baptized, if they still continue to wallow in their sinful pollutions, and take no care to seek purification of heart and life. You may be washed with the water of baptism, and yet be driven down to hell among the polluted souls.

III. " Do not think yourselves exempt or excused from this ceremony, though you are possessed of all the graces signified thereby." Christ himself passed under it, *Matt.* iii. 13—17. Those who had received the Holy Spirit received baptism also. Acts x. 47. *Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized?* As there must be faith in order to salvation, so it is the common and appointed way of God that there should be baptism too. Mark xvi. 16. *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.* A wilful and entire neglect and contempt of any ordinance of Christ gives too much reason to suspect whether there be any true faith.

IV. " Take all proper occasions to refresh the sense of your baptism on your spirits, and to act over again between God and your own souls all that baptism implies, though the ceremony itself be but once to be administered to you." When you see baptism administered to others, remember you yourselves were once baptized; recal the season when you were thus washed with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Acknowledge your defilement by nature and by practice: Go to the laver that is opened for sin and uncleanness, even the fountain of the blood of Jesus; seek the fresh influences of the purifying Spirit to cleanse you from all impurities of your heart, and to make you clean and holy. Give up yourselves afresh with sacred pleasure to God as your Father, to Jesus as your Saviour, to the Holy Ghost as your Sanctifier; renew the surrender of yourselves to Christ as his disciples, and engage yourselves afresh to be the Lord's.

V. " Be very watchful to answer all the engagements of your christian baptism, to guard yourselves from every defilement of flesh and spirit, and to grow up into greater degrees of holiness and purity." It was a happy and successful defence against temptations in the primitive days, when the christian could say, " I am baptized." Let this also be the constant language of our souls; " I am washed in the sacred laver of regeneration, how shall I defile myself again? I am devoted and consecrated to Christ, how shall I estrange myself from him? Forgive, O Lord, all my shameful pollutions, since I have been washed in the christian baptism, and guard me, O blessed Spirit, against every new defilement, that I may be presented at last before my God and my Saviour without spot or blemish, in the day of his public glory and of my complete joy."—" Now to him who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever." *Amen.*

SERMON LII.

CHRISTIAN DILIGENCE, WITH THE BLESSINGS THAT ATTEND IT, IN OPPOSITION TO SLOTH, SECURITY, BACKSLIDING, &c.

PROV. xiii. 4.

THE SOUL OF THE SLUGGARD DESIRETH AND HATH NOTHING; BUT THE SOUL OF THE DILIGENT SHALL BE MADE FAT.

SHOULD we apply these words to labour or learning, to trade or religion, to the concerns of this life, or that which is to come, still we shall find this sentence of Solomon true and useful; it is a remark well worthy of our attention, and our best improvement. The son of diligence, considered either as a man or a christian, is in a fair way to obtain the good things he seeks: His desire shall be satisfied, his soul shall be made fat, or filled with them, he shall increase in earthly possessions, he shall abound in knowledge and wisdom, or he shall grow rich in grace and the fruits of righteousness; but the slothful wretch shall be poor indeed. In vain doth he sit with folded hands, and wish for the blessings of nature or grace, of time or eternity: The idle hand shall be empty still, he shall desire in vain, and shall never possess.

Diligence is the appointed theme of my discourse, the diligence of a man or a christian. I shall endeavour, first to describe it in all the several parts of it, and then take a short survey of the blessings, temporal and spiritual, which attend it; and by the way, I shall give some occasional hints of the crime and punishment of the contrary vices.

First, Let us enquire what are the several things which are implied in true diligence, whether it relate to the things of this life, or the life to come.

I. "Diligence includes the employment of every part of our time in proper business; and thus it stands in opposition both to sauntering and doing nothing at all, to trifling, or doing what is to no purpose, and to mistiming the businesses which are to be done." Every person in the world has some proper business to do daily, for God, for themselves, or for the good of their fellow-creatures. Mankind, even in the golden age of innocence, was not made for idleness. Adam was put into the garden of Eden, *to dress and keep it;* Gen. ii. 8, 15. and it is our duty wisely to enquire what is our proper work, and to employ ourselves in it. But how many idle creatures are there in the world that act quite contrary to this rule?

1. How many do we find who saunter their lives away, and let their days, and months, and years run to waste in doing nothing at all, as though they were brought into the world to eat, drink and sleep, to gaze away life, and then to lie down in death? O wretched abuse of these precious blessings, life and time! "*I must work*, saith our Lord, *while it is day, I must do the particular work, for which my Father sent me hither: the night is coming when no man can work;*" John ix. 4. Let us all be imitators of our blessed Jesus. The business of the rich is to render their wealth useful to the good of

the world, and to the interests of religion: The business of the poor is to labour to obtain their daily bread, and not be burdensome to their neighbours, nor useless inhabitants of the earth: The business of a scholar is to improve his mind in daily knowledge; and as for all the learned professions, their business is to lay out that knowledge for the ease and happiness of mankind in this world, or the next.

It is the proper business of a sinner to seek after converting grace, to return to God by repentance, to secure his salvation by faith in the Son of God, and all instances of new obedience. It is the proper business of a true christian to grow in grace, to adorn his profession with holiness, and abound in good works. It is the necessary and daily business of a mortal and an accountable creature to prepare for death and judgment, that he may die in peace, and give up his account with joy, if he should be summoned away on a sudden. Thus it appears every creature hath some proper business, both relating to this life, and the life to come: And therefore a sauntering and idle life is a high offence to the God of nature and grace, time and eternity.

2. "Trifling or wasting time in impertinences, is another vice contrary to this part of diligence." Doing nothing to the purpose, is little better than doing nothing at all: As if a youth designed for the study of divinity, should lay aside his Bible, and spend his whole time in measuring squares and circles, and mathematical figures; or if a man of trade, or an artificer, who must provide daily bread for himself and his household, should waste his days in coffee-houses, still learning, and still discoursing of the rights of election of the kings of Poland, or in adjusting the bloody quarrels between the Turkish and the Persian armies. This is such an impertinence in the sight of God and men, as deserves the just reproaches of men, and punishment from the hand of providence. To wear out those seasons in prating and tattling, which are appointed for useful labour or business, is a wretched abuse of time, and merits the frequent censure of Solomon the wisest of men. *The talk of the lips tendeth only to poverty, and a prating fool shall fall:* Prov. xiv. 23. and x. 8. And too many there are who pretend to christianity, but they are only talking christians instead of being active in the duties of their appointed station, and their zeal for religion appears no where but in their tongues. Others also shall be pronounced idle, and triflers at the bar of God, who lay out all their spirits in little controversy, perhaps about mint, anise and cummin, or in vindication of rites and forms, and ceremonies which God never appointed, while they neglect the weighty matters of the law and the gospel, justice and goodness, repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus, the correction of their tempers, and the amendment of their lives. Again,

3. "Mistiming the various actions of life is another abuse of time, and contrary to true diligence." *There is a time*, saith the wise man, *for every purpose under heaven, and every thing is beautiful in its season;* Eccles. iii. 1, 11. If we should be dancing at midnight, and sleeping at church, or seeking our diversions in an hour of business; if we should work with our hands, when the season calls us to our closets, or spend that time in reading and prayer, which is appointed for the labours and cares of the family; these are all failures in our duty, and contrary to the true diligence which the word of God requires. That is but trifling or impertinence in one season, which is a necessary duty at another; nor will any works out of season prosper or succeed well, or be approved of God: And yet there are some persons so habitually guilty of this folly, that

whensoever the certain season of any duty returns, they are ever beginning to do something else first, which perhaps they did not think of before, which would be much better left till afterwards. Prov. vi. 6. *Go to the ant, thou sluggard*, who seizes the days of summer and fair weather to gather her food, and hides herself at winter, and lives upon her former provision.

2. The *second* thing implied in true diligence is "earliness in opposition to delay." If we consider ourselves as men, the early man shews that his heart is in his work; but he that from hour to hour, or from day to day, delays the practice of any duty or service, gives sufficient notice that he doth not like it, and would never perform it at all, if he could safely avoid it. If we begin betimes the service of the day, we happily provide against hinderances, and we are not in danger of being thrown into a hurry by accidental avocations: We have hours before us to do our work well, to review and correct it: We keep our temper, and are composed amidst our cares and labours, and finish our designs with honour. But if we suffer our work to lie neglected till the latter end of the appointed time, we are ever in a hurry, in perpetual confusion, our temper is ruffled with every incident that comes in our way, and gives us the least hinderance, and we never perform with such accuracy or such success. Have we not sometimes learned these inconveniences by sad experience, and shall we ever be guilty of delays again.

Or if we consider ourselves as christians, have we not found that, by needless delays, we have lost the season of morning prayer, and could never recover it again, but have passed the morning without solemn addresses to the God of our lives? And hath not many a sinner felt the dreadful consequences of his delays of repentance, when, day after day, and week after week, his own conscience, and the voice of God in his word, have called upon him to repent and return to God, and invited him to accept of pardon and peace, to receive the grace of Christ and everlasting life. What terrible agonies of soul, what reproaches of conscience on a dying bed, what horror of spirit in the review of his cursed delays? And with what tormenting despair his soul hath been hurried out of this life, and been plunged into an eternal state, without hope, or at least at a terrible uncertainty? Children, can you hear this, and not enquire betimes, *what must I do to be saved?* Acts xvi. 30. Can you hear this in the days of youth, and delay any longer to secure your immortal concerns, and provide for the approaching hour of death and judgment? It is a dangerous thing for children in their younger years to learn the language of idleness, and to cry out on every occasion, "It is time enough yet." They generally grow up to feel the bitter fruits of delay. It is an excellent rule in the things of earth or of heaven, "Never leave that to be done the next hour, which may properly be done now, nor dare to put off till to-morrow the business which you may as well begin to-day." *Who knows what a day may bring forth?* Prov. xxvii. 1. He that hath done his work to-day is secure of peace, but to-morrow may be all disappointment. Let us who pretend to be christians, or to have a regard to God and religion; let us, upon the first notice of any duty, make haste to the practice of it. Upon the first conviction of sin, let us apply ourselves immediately to God for pardoning and sanctifying grace: Let us return to our duty with early diligence, like David, *As soon as thou saidst, Seek ye my face, my heart replied, Thy face will I seek. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments;* Psalm xxvii. 8. and cxix. 60.

3. "Diligence implies activity and vigour, in opposition to sloth and laziness, languor and indifference." It is not lazy wishes that will perform work, or obtain a blessing.

The sluggard desireth and hath nothing, *Proverbs* xiii. 4. therefore the wise man advises, Eccles. ix. 10. *Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might*; then it is likely to be finished in proper season: But the slothful wretch makes no riddance of his work; he moves heavily in his business, just as he doth upon his bed, *like a door upon its hinges*, and never gets forwards, *Prov.* xxvi. 24. A beautiful simile indeed, nor is the description of the sluggard less elegant, verse 25. "When he hath hid his hand in his bosom, it grieves him to bring it to his mouth."

And what poor work doth a christian make who is cold, indifferent, slothful, and lazy in the things which concern his soul and salvation? He makes a pretence to religion, but how poorly doth he proceed in it who hath no activity, no vigour, no fervency therein? Where he was last year, there he is now, or else gone farther backward: His sins are still as unmortified, his temptations still as powerful and prevailing, his hopes still as low, and his holiness as much interrupted as in years past: He was not fit to appear before God then, and he is no fitter now: He was then in terror at the thoughts of dying, and he is still in the same terror. The slothful christian, upon examination, finds his faith hath scarce improved one grain; he is no nearer salvation than when at first he believed. Is this the obedience we owe to the command of Christ? Luke xiii. 24. *Strive to enter in at the strait gate, labour for the meat that endures to everlasting life;* John vi. 27. Regard the advice of the blessed apostle. Rom xii. 11. *Be ye not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.* Permit me to ask the lazy christians of our present age, "Is this an imitation of ancient saints, who laboured night and day to get nearer to heaven, and, as it were, took the kingdom of heaven by a holy violence?" Let us bestir ourselves then, and shake off this lethargy of soul, this dull humour; let us call up all our natural and christian powers into exercise, and *be no longer slothful, but followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises;* Heb. vi. 11.

4. "True diligence implies also watchfulness, in opposition to a drowsy, heedless temper, a thoughtless security of soul." We must be awake to seize all advantages for our work, as well as to guard against surprises and dangers. How dreadfully is the sluggard exposed to loss and ruin! If the sailors sleep in their voyage, they run upon sands and rocks, and lose their ship and their lives. If a centinel sleep in his watch-tower, the enemy gains considerable advantage, and seizes some post of importance, or enters the gates of the city. How often hath a whole army been surprised and routed, who lay secure in their camp, and kept no due watch? We christians are soldiers under the banner of Christ; our enemies are many within and without; our great adversary, the devil, is malicious and busy; if we indulge security and drowsiness, he seizes every unguarded hour to wound, and defile, and distress our souls. Therefore the apostle Peter demands our watchfulness. 1 Pet. v. 8. *Be sober, be vigilant,* or watchful, *for your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.* One unwatchful hour, one slumber in the day of temptation, hath given Satan opportunity for unknown mischief, and administered matter to a christian for bitter repentance all his days. Shall we then ever hearken to the enticements of slothful nature? Shall we ever gratify the tempter at this rate to our own certain loss, and to the danger of our eternal ruin.

5. "Diligence yet further implies a constancy in our work, in opposition to looking back, and perpetual avocation by diversions and pleasures." The foolish Israelites were

often looking back to the leeks, and onions, and flesh pots of Egypt, and were in danger of losing the promised land. Where love of pleasure and diversion often interrupts the business we are engaged in, we shall make but poor broken work, and have but little hope to succeed in it. Prov. xxi. 17. *He that loveth pleasure, shall be a poor man.*

And as they can never grow rich in temporal things who are carried away from their business by every diversion, so neither can a christian grow rich in grace, who frequently interrupts his duty to indulge mirth and carnal delights. We must be stedfast and constant in our christian race, and not turn aside from the path of duty to gather this and the other flower of sensual pleasure, if we would finish our course with joy, and so run as to obtain the prize.

6. Another thing implied in true diligence, "is firmness and resolution in our labour, in opposition to all the difficulties which attend our work." We suppose every valuable and excellent design hath some difficulties, more or less, always attending it; some hardship which must be endured, some obstacles and impediments which must be broke through; but if we are frighted at every shadow of difficulty, we shall never fulfil our service, nor perfect our design. This Solomon hath often observed: *The sluggard cries, it is cold, and will not go early to plough, and therefore he shall beg in harvest, and have nothing.* He complains *there is a lion in the way, there is a lion in that street*, where the path of duty lies; therefore he sits down in sloth, and keeps himself safe and idle at home. *The way of the sluggard is as a hedge of thorns;* he imagines every step he takes in the path of diligence and industry hath such troubles attending it, such thorns and briars, as he calls them, that he cannot break through, and therefore he refuses to labour. See *Prov.* xx. 4. and xxvi. 13. and xxv. 19.

And is not this matter the same in spiritual things? How many are there who cry out of the ways of religion as painful and hard? They are frighted at the duties of repentance, self-denial, and mortification of sin, at cutting off right hands, and plucking out right eyes; they are offended at persecution, which sometimes rises against strict godliness; the frowns of the world terrify their hearts; they dare not be singular in the profession of faith, or the practice of virtue: They are ashamed of the worship and the name of God in the midst of profane and sinful men; they go back, as some disciples did in the days of Christ, and walk no longer with him: But let us remember the divine threatenings, *The man who hath put his hand to the plough, and looks back;* Luke ix. 62. *my soul, saith the Lord, shall have no pleasure in him;* Heb. x. 38.

7. The last character I shall ascribe to the diligent man is, "perseverance, in opposition to fainting and weariness." The man of diligence must hold out to the end, if he expect to have his labour crowned. An imperfect work among men is very little worth: It is the end that crowns all.

And it is just the same in religion: Unless we persevere in the duties of holiness, we have no reason to expect the divine reward: but the glorious recompence is sure to us, *if we are not weary in well doing; we shall reap i due time, if we faint not;* Gal. vi. 9. St. Paul, just before his martyrdom, rejoices in this; he had *fought the good fight*, in opposition to all the enemies of the gospel, and he had *finished his course of faith and holiness: Henceforth*, saith he, *is laid up for me a crown of righteousness;* 2 Tim. iv. 7. Let us animate ourselves by his blessed example, and by the promise of our Lord Jesus to the church of Ephesus. Rev. ii. 10. *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.* Let these thoughts awaken our drowsy spirits, and prolong our patience

in the work of the Lord, that we may not at last be found *among them who draw back to perdition, but among those who believe, and persevere to the saving of the soul;* Heb. x. 39.

Thus far I have been engaged in setting before you the several things implied in diligence or industry, both in matters of this life, and that which is to come; but I have in some measure entered upon my second general head, by often touching upon the happy fruits of diligence, as well as the dismal consequences of all the contrary vices. My remaining work, therefore, will be very short, and that is, to mention, in a more express and distinct manner, the blessings which attend diligence in a course of virtue and goodness; and they are such as these:

1. Diligence hath a natural tendency to success, and to obtain the good things we seek. *In all labour*, saith Solomon, *there is profit;* Prov. xiv. 23. *He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread;* Prov. xii. 11. and *the hand of the diligent maketh rich;* Prov. x. 4. But as for *the field of the slothful, it is overgrown with thorns; nettles and briars cover it;* Prov. xxiv. 30. *And drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags;* xxiii. 21.

It is the same in spiritual things as in the things of nature. Diligence in seeking the knowledge of God shall be crowned with an increase of sacred knowledge. Hosea vi. 3. *Then shall we know the Lord, if we follow on to know him. Give attendance to reading*, saith Paul to Timothy, *that thy profiting may appear to all;* 1 Tim. iv. 14. Diligence and labour with our own hearts, in weaning them from the world, and a fervent constancy in the pursuits of godliness, is the proper and rational way to obtain the blessings of grace and glory. But I add,

2. Diligence hath the rich and special promises of a faithful God to encourage its hope. What David said to his son Solomon, with regard to building the temple, the gospel saith the same to every christian. 1 Chron. xxii. 16. *Arise and be doing, and the Lord shall be with thee:* And Solomon gave the same advice to his son, and the same promise. Prov. ii. 3, 4. *If thou seekest after wisdom as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou obtain saving knowledge, and learn the fear of the Lord. Give all diligence*, saith Peter in the name of Christ; 2 *Pet.* i. 5—10. *give all diligence, and add one christian grace to another, add to your faith virtue, to your virtue temperance, patience, godliness, and charity. Give diligence again to make your calling and your election sure; for if ye do these things ye shall never fall, but an entrance shall be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

3. Diligence and industry are a happy guard against snares and temptations of every kind. When the devil finds you idle, he hath a proper moment to assault you with some powerful temptation: He will employ you in his work, when he finds your hands and hearts entirely at leisure and unemployed: He that is not awake to his duty is not awake to his danger, and is easily surprised into mischief; but the wakeful, diligent christian, is like Nehemiah's builders on the walls of Jerusalem, *with a weapon in one hand, while they laboured with the other;* Neh. iv. 17. and thus their work went on with good success and safety.

4. Diligence is always making a progress towards its designed end, but the slothful man is in great danger of going backward. The gardener, who neglects his daily work, will find the ground which he hath cultivated over-run with weeds again in a little time. If a waterman, who rows against the stream, be slothful and drowsy, his vessel will make no progress, but be carried backward continually: So if a labourer hearkens to the enticements of drowsy nature, and learns this slothful language, *A little more sleep, a*

little more slumber, poverty will come upon him as an armed man; Prov. xxiv. 33, 44. and rob him of all his gains. Negligent, and unwatchful, and lazy christians, will, for the most part, lose what they have gained in the things of religion too: The apostle John, in his second epistle, verse 8. guards against it. *Take heed that ye lose not the things which ye have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward.* How many have lost their first zeal, their first love, and their early joys in religion, by a sinful security of soul, and for want of a due concern to grow in grace. It is growth in religion that evidences the truth of it, and secures the comforts of it.

5. The diligent christian is a most useful person in the world; he does the most good himself, and becomes an excellent example to all that are round about him. He lays the sluggard under continual conviction, and puts him to daily shame, if he have any of his senses awake to see, or feel, or take notice. Such a christian animates and encourages all that are near him to the same diligence, as fire kindles fire, and spreads the blaze far and near. Active and lively christians make one another's hearts warm in religion, and help to diffuse the sacred fire round about. The zealous servants of the blessed God give credit and honour to their profession; but what a shameful thing is it, to see some christians idle and careless in the duties of their daily calling, and slothful and lazy in their practice of religion too? The truth is, they do not make religion their practice, but a mere matter of talk and sound; and while they refuse to labour in the station where God has placed them, they disgrace their profession, and expose themselves to the just and severe sentence of the apostle. 2 Thess. iii. 10. *He that will not work, let him not eat,* that is, let him starve, for christianity is no just pretence for idleness.

6. The diligent christian finishes his work with peace, hope, and joy. He shall review his conduct and his labours with an inward satisfaction, and a sacred pleasure of soul: his conscience is a joyful witness; he hath not only a safe, but an abundant entrance generally administered to him into the heavenly kingdom, and he obtains a fairer crown; for *the Lord, the righteous Judge, will reward every one according to his works;* Rom. ii. 6—11. He who had one talent, and improved it, by gaining ten more, had rule over ten cities: He that gained five talents, had five cities under his government, *Luke* xix. 17, 19. But let us dread the curse of the wicked and slothful servant: Observe the slothful servant is pronounced wicked by the month of Christ himself. *Matt.* xxv. 26. He is to be *cast into utter darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* The slothful wretch, at the end of his days, sees his great work undone, his heart not yet turned to God and godliness, and is overwhelmed with horror when in view of death and judgment. It is the cry of his soul, *O that I might die the death of the righteous;* Num. xxiii. 10. but there is no crown of righteousness for him, no prize of glory; he hath neither run nor fought, nor laboured so as to obtain it. He wishes for heaven in vain; his desires are his torment, for they shall never be fulfilled; desire and despair are misery enough. Happy soul, who hath been faithful, diligent, and watchful in every station of life, and has made suitable advances in faith, and love, and holiness. He waits till his Lord shall come, and he rejoices in hope, for he shall then receive the glorious sentence from the lips of his Judge, *Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord;* Matt. xxv. 21, 23. and be thou possessed of blessedness in the upper world, in proportion to the talents I trusted thee with on earth, and to thy diligent and faithful improvement of every talent. *Amen.*

SERMON LIII.

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP, WITH ITS DUTIES AND ADVANTAGES.

ROMANS XV. 6, 7.

THAT YE MAY WITH ONE MIND, AND WITH ONE MOUTH GLORIFY GOD, EVEN THE FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST,—RECEIVE YE ONE ANOTHER, AS CHRIST ALSO HATH RECEIVED US TO THE GLORY OF GOD.

FOR christians to join themselves in particular societies or congregations, in order to carry on the great interests of religion, appears to be both a duty and a privilege: It stands upon just foundations as a duty, and as a privilege it is attended with excellent advantages. I confess, the words of my text chiefly design to teach us what is the particular rule whereby this practice should be conducted, and who should be the persons thus joined together in holy fellowship, even the gentiles who are converted to Christ, as well as the Jews: Yet the general duty is plainly intimated, *viz.* that those who profess the name of Christ, and have reason to hope that Christ has received them, should also receive one another into mutual communion in all the social parts and privileges of the christian religion, *that with one mind and with one mouth they may glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

In my discourse on this subject, I shall endeavour to set before you these several things.

I. The reasonableness of this practice.

II. Some special advantages that arise from it.

III. The characters of the persons more particularly of whom this is required, and in what numbers they should unite together to make a christian church.

IV. The duties of persons thus united in christian societies or churches.

V. I shall mention the officers which Christ has appointed in his churches to perform peculiar services therein.

First, We are to consider the "reasonableness of this practice, whereby it will appear to be the duty of those who profess the religion of Christ to agree together, and form themselves into particular societies."

The first reason is this, That "without such an agreement to unite together in the practice of christianity, there can be no such thing as public worship regularly maintained among christians, nor public honours paid to God in the name of Jesus." Now the worship of God in public assemblies is so necessary for his honour in all ages, and under all dispensations, and was so carefully practised among the primitive christians by the authority of Christ and his apostles, that we cannot be excused from it, if we profess ourselves to believe in Christ. This has been made sufficiently evident in a former discourse.* And if there be such a thing as public worship maintained, the light of

* See Sermon XLIX. of Berry-street Sermons, Vol. II. p. 305.

nature shews us there must be some certain time, and some certain place appointed by agreement among such worshippers, since no one christian that I know of has any authority given by the scripture to appoint precisely the times and places, and magisterially to impose them upon his brethren.

As for the place under the Jewish dispensation, God himself appointed the tabernacle in the days of Moses, and the temple in the time of Solomon, as sacred places for public sacrifices, and some peculiar solemnities of worship; but the sacredness of place is now at an end, as our Lord informs us; *John* iv. 21, 24. and even during that dispensation, the synagogues throughout the land, where God was weekly worshipped by the people, were built and frequented by the agreement or consent of the people, as the light of nature directed; and the worship of christian churches is more a-kin to that of the synagogues than that of the temple.

As for the time, the first day of the week is the christian day of worship by apostolic appointment: But christians must agree together upon the hour, as well as the day, in order to unite in the several parts of worship.

Without such an agreement of christians among themselves, there could be no celebration of public ordinances in a becoming manner, no united prayers and praises could ascend to heaven, there would be no social attendance upon the word preached, no participation of the great ordinance of the Lord's Supper, which is a part of social religion, a sacred feast or representation of the blessed communion which christians have both with Christ their Lord, and with one another. For this reason they must agree upon the place to meet in, *that the whole church may come together in one place*, as 1 Cor. xi. 20. and they must agree upon one hour, or *tarry for one another till they are come;* 1 Cor. xi. 33.

The second reason for such a practice is this, *viz.* "Without an agreement to keep up such societies for worship, the doctrines of Christ and his gospel could not be so constantly and so extensively held forth to the world, and there would be no rational hope of the continuance or increase of christianity among men." Particular christians die out of this world from day to day, and there would be few rising up in their stead to support this religion, if there were not public assemblies appointed or agreed upon: It is in these assemblies the gospel, with all the duties and blessings thereof, is published to the world; it is here unbelievers may attend and hear the glorious truths of the gospel set forth in a proper light, and the name and memory, the person and offices, the graces and glories of our great Redeemer are displayed among men; 1 Cor. xiv. 23. *When the whole church is come together in one place, there come in those that are unlearned or unbelievers;* and when the important affairs of christianity are managed with becoming order and decency, and the doctrines of our salvation are set forth in a happy light, *They that believe not are convinced, the secrets of their hearts are made manifest, they will worship God together with us, and report that God is among us of a truth;* verse 25. Hereby those that are convinced of their sin and danger, and have fled for refuge to lay hold on Jesus as their only hope, are encouraged to come and join themselves to the church, when they behold the beauty of the Lord in his gospel-sanctuary, and the appearances of his power and glory there.

In short, I might add, that there is no public religion, no worship of any kind, can be well maintained in the world, without such an agreement among the persons that

profess that religion: Even heathens, and Turks, and Jews, all sorts of worshippers in every age, think it necessary to agree to worship their God in particular societies, and thereby maintain their religious communion with each other.

It is granted indeed, that where a national religion is established by the authority of the magistrate, and the times, and places, and modes of worship are appointed by him, together with the persons who shall minister therein throughout the several cities, towns, and villages in that nation, there is no such necessity for private persons to form an express agreement among themselves about this matter, if their consciences lead them to the same worship and practice which the magistrate requires: Their constant willing attendance implies such an agreement. But I can find no power of imposing this public worship, given to magistrates, among all the principles of natural reason, nor among any of the writings of the New Testament: And those persons whose consciences lead them to differ from this established religion, are then directed by the light of nature, as well as scripture, to form such agreements among themselves, in order to maintain christian worship, and the practice of christianity, as they find it represented in the Bible.

The second thing I proposed, was to shew you some of the advantages of such an agreement for christian fellowship; and among others I might mention such as these:

1. "It gives courage to every christian to profess and practise his religion, when many persons are engaged by mutual agreement in the same profession and practice." We do not love to be singular, and to be pointed at by the world, as standing and acting alone, especially in the affairs of God and religion; but when a good company unite themselves together for such a sacred purpose, this takes away the reproach of singularity; they all strengthen one another's hands in the ways of the Lord, and they bear up with more firmness of heart against the reproaches of the world.

2. "It is more for the particular edification of christians, that such societies should be formed, where the word of Christ is constantly preached, where the ordinances of Christ are administered, and the religion of Christ is held forth in a social and honourable manner to the world." Hereby every christian knows where to go to hear the gospel preached, and multitudes are instructed at once in the great things that relate to their eternal peace: Hereby those who have known the things of Christ more easily call to mind what they have learned, and are admonished of their daily duty by the public preacher: Here their prayers are united, and their songs of praise; and such a union of prayers and praises is delightful and acceptable to him who inhabits the praises of Israel, and who has encouraged them to agree in asking mercies from God, and to strive together in prayer. United devotions are much more likely to obtain success.

3. "Such a holy fellowship and agreement to walk together in the ways of Christ, is a happy guard against backsliding and apostacy; it is a defence against the temptations of the world, and the defilements of a sinful age." Having given my name up to Christ in a public manner, how shall I dare to renounce him? Having joined myself to the followers of Christ, how shall I break those bonds, and depart from them, or disgrace that holy fellowship by any known sin? Having made a public profession of my avowed obedience to Jesus as a Lord and King, how can I dare decline his service, or indulge myself in those iniquities which his gospel forbids?

4. "Christians thus united together by mutual acquaintance and agreement, can give each other better assistance in every thing that relates to religion, whether public or

private:" They warm one another's hearts by mutual holy conversation; they support one another when ready to fall, and raise and *restore those that are fallen in a spirit of meekness;* Gal. vi. 1. But as Solomon warns us, "Wo to him that falls while he walks alone, who shall help him up? Or how can one be warm alone;" *Eccles.* iv. 10. Hand joining in hand adds force and strength, assistance and stability, to any purpose or design whatsoever; and frequent meeting together gives fellow-christians opportunity of exhorting one another to maintain their common christianity, as in Heb. x. 25. *Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, but exhort one another, and provoke one another to love and to good works.* Christians, when they come to mutual acquaintance and agreements of this kind, they afford better help to one another, when under difficulties by advice, and under sorrows they relieve each other by christian consolation and social prayers. They afford greater aid and strength to each other against temptations and dangers, because they are better informed of each other's circumstances and tempers. They know one another's wants and weaknesses more, they pity one another with more tenderness, and they guard each other against the common injuries and insults of men. Happy the persons who are thus united in the fellowship of the gospel, and who, by practising these duties, and communicating and enjoying these advantages, cast a glory upon the gospel of Christ.

The third general head leads me to enquire more particularly, "Who are the persons who should thus receive one another in the Lord, or join together in christian fellowship?" The general direction of the New Testament is contained in the words of my text, that we should receive into this sacred communion all that Christ has received to partake of his salvation, and that we make no other test whereby to receive persons into our particular congregations, than a credible profession of those things which Christ has made necessary in order to partake of his benefits. *Receive ye one another, as Christ hath us;* Rom. xv. 7. whether ye be Jews or Greeks, whether ye be *bond or free,* whatsoever different character ye sustain in the civil life, or whatever different nations gave you birth. Whosoever makes a credible profession to have received Jesus Christ and his gospel, and their practice be correspondent to their profession, they are to be received by us, though they may differ in particular opinions, or in particular practices, which are of less moment and importance. This is one great design of St. Paul's xivth chapter to the Romans. In his day there were some christians that maintained a regard to Jewish ceremonies, there were others who thought themselves entirely delivered from all those yokes of bondage; some eat meat with freedom, while others only eat herbs; some observed particular days as holy, while others neglected to observe them; some were weak in the faith, and others strong; but they are all called to receive one another into christian fellowship, and not to make these *doubtful disputations* a bar to their sacred union; *for the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; and he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of men,* and therefore he should not be excluded from christian societies; *Rom.* xiv. 1, 2, 3, 17, 18.

This, I say, is the general rule: But it must be confessed, that there are some christians whose sentiments are so directly contrary to others, in matters of worship or discipline, that it is hardly possible they should unite in public worship; as, for instance, he that believes prescribed forms of prayer to be an unlawful thing, cannot join with a society, who never pray but by prescribed forms: He that thinks no man can be a

minister, unless he be ordained by the hand of a diocesian bishop, cannot unite in worship with a society whose ministers never had, nor desired such an ordination. But let each take heed how they embrace such limiting principles. There are others who differ so widely in some of the most important doctrines of christianity, that they cannot worship together with any tolerable edification or comfort, *viz.* Those who believe Christ died as a proper sacrifice of atonement for sin, and venture their whole hope of salvation upon it, and wait for sanctifying influences from the Holy Spirit, cannot comfortably unite with such sort of christians as suppose Christ to be only a messenger and prophet sent to restore natural religion to men, and who deny any atoning virtue to his death, or any influences from the Spirit to change their hearts, and make them holy. These are articles which I take to be matters of so high importance in the religion of the gospel, that I cannot advise persons to unite in societies for worship, where they are no better agreed in their principles: The humble and sincere believer of the gospel of Christ would find his devotion and his edification continually interrupted by such jarring opinions and contests, and the whole work of preaching, prayer, and praise, would be very disgustful to one part, while it pleases the other. *How is it possible two should walk together, except they are better agreed?* Amos iii. 3. They agree indeed in the name of christianity, but their real religion seems to be of a different kind.

The general advice which I would give as most conformable to the sentiments of the great apostle, is this: "Let every person take heed that he does not too much enlarge, nor too much narrow the principles of christianity; that he does not make any article of faith or practice more or less necessary than scripture has made it; and that he does not raise needless scruples in his own breast, nor in the hearts of others, by too great a separation from such as our common Lord has received."

I proceed now to consider, "how great the number of persons should be, which may properly form such a christian society?" And in answer to this question, I must say, it is left very much to the liberty and prudence of men. In general, there should be so many as to give it the name of a public assembly: And yet if there are but a few christians within the reach of one another, who can conveniently meet once a week, at the same time and the same place, for religious purposes, I think these may join themselves in christian fellowship, and the promise of our Saviour belongs to them, *Where two or three of you are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of them;* Matt. xviii. 20.

We might also observe, that no more should usually join together in one society, than can frequently meet together in one place at one time, and be edified by the mouth of one preacher, or lift up their joint prayers and praises to God by the lips of one minister: And perhaps the very words of my text may include that meaning; *Receive one another, that with one mind and one mouth you may glorify God the Father. The Corinthian church met together in one place;* 1 Cor. xiv. 23. *And while one spoke in prayer, prophecy, or exhortation, the others were called to silence and attention;* verse 31.

Now a company of christians thus agreeing in the most important articles of faith and practice, and consenting to unite together to worship God through Jesus Christ in all his ordinances, and to keep up the christian interest in the world, are properly a church of Christ. Such was the church of Corinth, such the church at Philippi, such the several churches of Galatia, and the churches of Asia, of which mention is made in the

New Testament;* and their agreement to worship and walk together in christian fellowship, is that church-covenant, which in the very nature of things is necessary to constitute a regular christian society, and to maintain the gospel in the world in the principles and practices of it: Nor can there be any christian communion maintained in an orderly manner, without such a covenant or agreement as this is, either more plainly expressed, or necessarily implied: It is only the addition of some things which Christ has not required to such a covenant or agreement as this is, that has exposed the name of a church-covenant to so many reproaches in the world: Otherwise, I am sure, it deserves none.

The fourth head I proposed, was to represent some of the "duties which plainly arise from such an agreement of christians to walk and worship together, for the support of their religion."

1. May we not say, that "all the duties which the disciples of Christ owe to their fellow-christians throughout the world, are more particularly incumbent upon those who are united by their own consent in the same religious society?" Such as to love one another, to assist, comfort, and succour one another in things that relate to this life, or the life to come; to watch over and warn one another, lest any fall into sin; to admonish one another in love, and to restore those that are fallen with holy tenderness; and in general to fulfil all kind and friendly offices to each other, in vindication of their common faith, and in the practice of pure religion. We are commanded *to do good to all men, especially to the household of faith;* Gal. vi. 10. and what is due to all the churches of Christ on earth, seems more particularly due to the church of which we are members, because these are within the reach of our notice and our assistance, and we expect the same friendly offices from them, since we have mutually given up ourselves to one another in the Lord.

2. "Those who are united by such an agreement, ought most usually to attend on the public assemblies and ministrations of that church, where it can be done with reasonable conveniency;" for we have joined ourselves in society for this very purpose. It is granted indeed, that many particular circumstances in life may give a just occasion for persons, more or less, frequently to join with other churches in their solemnities, which it would be too large at present to reckon up; but if upon every trivial humour we absent ourselves from that worship, and those ministrations which we have agreed to support, it has a tendency to destroy that very fellowship which we engage to maintain; and if each take their liberty in this respect, without just reason, to wander where they please, the minister may preach to the bare walls, nor can any ordinances be celebrated with constancy and honour.

I might add also, that the constant attendance upon the same ministry, is the way to obtain a more uniform and regular knowledge of the whole scheme of christianity, since it is to be supposed, that there is more uniformity in the sentiments of the same preacher

* It is granted the scripture sometimes speaks of a church in the house, which is smaller than that of a public assembly, unless it means that the christians of one place met together in that house for worship: sometimes it speaks of the church at Jerusalem, which in the first formation of it seems to be of a larger extent than could worship in one place, as consisting of many thousand souls: But we must remember, that the national church of the Jews could not be supposed all at once to be dissolved, so as to form itself into particular congregations, with all that regularity and order which afterward was observed in single christian societies; or perhaps the word "*church*" may be sometimes used to signify all the christians that dwell either in one city or in one house, without regard to any such special agreement of walking or worshipping together.

upon the several parts of the christian doctrine, and that in a course of years he will run through the various articles of faith and practice.

3. It is the duty of persons thus united, "to maintain their church or society, by receiving in new members amongst them by a general consent. Now when persons profess that they believe all the necessary and most important articles of the christian faith, when they declare they have solemnly given up themselves to Jesus Christ as their Saviour and their Lord, according to the requirements of the gospel, and when they engage to walk in all the ordinances of Christ, and desire to join with that particular society, it is the business and duty of the members thereof to receive such professors," supposing always that their good character in life gives a probable witness to the truth and sincerity of their profession. My text bids the converted Romans *receive one another in the Lord, as Christ has received them*, and every church should receive such as desire to join with them upon these principles.

4. "In order to keep the church pure from sin and scandal, they *should separate themselves from those that walk disorderly*, who are guilty of gross and known sins;" 2 *Thess.* iii. 6. They should reprove them with just severity, as the offence deserves; and if the crime be such as makes void their profession, they should be cast out of the church, or excommunicated, as the Corinthian offender, who committed incest, was cast out by his brethren, when the church was gathered together at the order of the apostle; 1 Cor. v. 4, 5, 7, 11, 13. *They must put away wicked persons from among them*, lest they be charged with encouraging or indulging iniquity. When there are settled elders or ministers among them, these ought to go before the church, in a way of advice and direction according to the will of Christ, and by their lips persons should be received into, or cast out of the congregation: This is called the "discipline of the church." Yet it is still to be deemed an act of the church; for Paul's epistles, which are written to the churches, require them to receive worthy members, and they are required to cast out those who are proved to be unworthy: Therefore this sentence inflicted on the Corinthian sinner is called *the punishment that was inflicted by many;* 2 Cor. ii. 6. and in the 7th and 8th verses, the church is commanded to forgive and receive him again upon his deep repentance.

5. "It is necessary that officers be chosen by the church, to fulfil several services in it, and for it." What person will take upon him constantly to speak in prayer, and be as the mouth of the people to God? Who shall preach, and be as the mouth of God to the people? Who shall baptize and administer the Lord's Supper? Who shall take care of a place for worship, or provide bread and wine for the Lord's table? Who shall collect and distribute the money of the church to the minister or the poor, if no particular persons are appointed for these purposes? But how many sorts of officers belong to a christian church, and what their distinct services are, shall be shewn under the next general head.

6. "It is the duty of those whose circumstances will afford it, to contribute of their earthly substance toward the common expences of the society;" that is, for the provision of the place of worship, the maintenance of the minister, the support of the poor, and for every thing that relates to the outward preservation and interests of the church: And each one should give according to his ability: This is but a piece of common justice, and it is sometimes fit to tell them so.

7. Shall I add in the last place, "That every thing of church affairs ought to be

managed with decency and order, with harmony and peace?" So the apostle directs the Corinthians; 1 Cor. xiv. 40. and chap. xvi. 14. *Let all things be done decently, and in order: Let all your affairs be done with charity:* So in my text, *with one mind, as well as with one mouth, glorify God.* It is true, indeed, every man has a will, and particular sentiments and inclinations of his own; but the most common and peaceful way of determining public affairs, is by the will and inclination of the major part manifested by a vote: And in matters of lesser moment, it is generally wisest and safest to submit to such a determination of the majority, where it may be done without sin: But it is a very desirable thing, if possible, to do nothing without the unanimous approbation of those that are concerned. If there are differences arising, those who dissent from the major part ought to be treated with all tenderness, in order to convince and persuade them to consent. But if any thing be determined by the majority, which they cannot comply with, they may peaceably make their remonstrances; and if they please, be dismissed from that society, or depart.

The fifth general leads me to enquire, "who are the officers which Christ hath appointed in his churches?" The names of the officers are these two, which probably include all the rest, *bishops and deacons;* so they are called; *Phil.* i. 1.

Bishops and elders, in primitive times, are both called overseers in the Greek, and seem to be the same officers, for St. Paul gives Titus the several characters of a bishop, in order to direct what sort of persons should be chosen for elders. Their business is to teach and instruct, to go before the people in performing acts of worship, *to give themselves up to the ministry of the word and prayer;* Acts vi. 4. and to exhort and govern the flock, not by their own will, nor by rules of their own invention, but only by the general rules that Christ has given, which must be applied to particular cases by their prudence, and in matters of moment they should do nothing without the consent of the society. What the difference is betwixt pastors and teachers, and whether there be any elders who only are called to rule, but not in a stated manner to teach or administer ordinances in the church, I cannot now tarry to enquire or determine.

The other officers are called deacons, the institution whereof you find in *Acts* vi. 1—6. and whose business it is to take care of the poor, and serve tables; that is, to see that the table of the Lord, the table of the poor, and the table of the minister be supplied; for the apostle informs us that the poor must be relieved, and *they which preach the gospel must live of the gospel, so has the Lord ordained;* 1 Cor. ix. 14. and other things which relate to the convenience of such a society in their public meeting, are generally supposed to come under the care of the deacons.*

When a christian society is furnished with such officers, it seems to have every thing within itself that is necessary to the being or well-being of a church of Christ. Here

* Now all these officers must be chosen by the church. Whatsoever may be pretended to be done by the apostles themselves, or what directions soever are supposed to be given to Timothy or Titus toward the settling of churches, or ordaining of officers, by virtue of their extraordinary gifts in the primitive times, without an explicit declaration of the choice of the people recorded, yet there is no authority given to any person that I can find, to make themselves, or any other persons, elders or deacons in a particular church, without their free consent: And indeed in those very primitive days, the choice of the people was plainly required towards the making of deacons; Acts vi. 3. *Look ye out among you men of honest report,* &c. though the apostles are said to ordain them *by prayer and imposition of hands;* verse 6. And in the earliest histories and records we have of these matters, the people's choice or consent was required to introduce elders or bishops into a church. Nor indeed is it proper that the souls of the people, nor the church's money, should be intrusted with elders or deacons imposed upon them by others.

are all things that are needful, which are within the power of man, for the preservation of piety and purity among them, and for the continuance of the same religion with decency and honour in a constant succession, so long as the gospel shall call in new converts out of this sinful world.

It remains only that I make a few reflections upon the present discourse.

Reflection I. "How beautiful is the order of the gospel, and the fellowship of a christian church! How strong and plain are the foundations, and the grounds of it! It is built on eternal reason, and the relations of things, as well as on the word of God." How happy it is, that the very light of nature dictates to christians far the greatest part of those duties which church fellowship requires, supposing still that the revealed doctrines and sacraments of christianity are first known and acknowledged. The peculiar positive prescriptions relating to christian churches are but few; whereas the general duties are such as reason and the light of nature seem to propose and approve in all voluntary religious societies whatsoever. If a deist, who professes nothing but natural religion, once came so far as to receive the christian faith and the sacraments, his reason would lead him into almost all the parts of christian communion, which I have described. It is the evil mixture of the needless and fanciful inventions of men, with the plain and common dictates of the light of nature and scripture in public religion, and the imposition of these things upon conscience, that has been the disgrace and ruin of many christian churches, and is a high misdemeanour against Christ, who is the Lord and King of his church. Reason and revelation are the only principles of his religion, and of the government of his kingdom.

II. "How little do they value the true interests of the christian religion, the public honour of Christ and his gospel, or the edification and comfort of their own souls, who neglect this holy communion?" There are twenty little excuses that some persons are ready to make against uniting themselves in fellowship: But let conscience do its office, and examine sincerely whether such excuses will be a sufficient apology in the great day. A late eminent divine, well known to some of us, *viz.* Mr. Nathaniel Taylor, gives this direction to those who have given up themselves to God in Jesus Christ. "Join yourselves," says he, "as members to some particular church of Christ or other. For the better edification of his body, our Saviour has appointed the erecting of particular churches. And wherever a sufficient number of persons were called, it was the constant practice of the primitive times, to unite in such societies as stated members of them, under the guidance and conduct of those pastors and teachers, which, with their own consent, the Holy Ghost had set over them to rule and feed them. This is a constitution of Christ, which is directly thwarted and opposed by a generation of loose and rambling christians, that content themselves with bare hearing, and that too in a very odd way. For they are a sort of volatile auditors, perpetually frisking to and fro, who can fix no where. Were all men of this humour, there could be no such thing as particular churches, which Christ has appointed for the edifying of his members: And how they can rationally expect to flourish either in grace or peace, while they live in a direct opposition to a manifest institution of our Lord Jesus, which was not more an effect of his authority, than of his wisdom and goodness, I wish men would seriously consider. Are any of you so self-sufficient, that you need no pastor, nor the assistance of your fellow-christians to watch over, admonish, rebuke, exhort, comfort, strengthen, and counsel you? Are there none of the churches of Christ that are pure enough? None

of them that have latitude or strictness enough for you; none of them worthy enough for you to join yourself unto? When our Lord hath given such variety of gifts to his ministers, is there none of them whose abilities suit you, and please your curious palates, that by settling under them you may be edified? I may say to such persons as Constantine once did to such a self-conceited man, 'Take a ladder and climb up to heaven by thyself alone.' In short, a society of believers walking together in gospel order, is like the excellent composure of syllables, words, and sentences, that have a great deal of sense and signification in them; but a separated and divided christian, that will join himself to no church, is like a single letter or disjointed syllable, that is perfect nonsense."

III. "How criminal are those persons who break the beautiful order and harmony of a church of Christ for trifles?" Whose fanciful humours, or whose imposing spirit raises up discord and contest in a well-settled and peaceful church; some are peevish, because the church will not consent to let them have their own will, or because others will not obey their assumed power. Some affect to make divisions upon every little occasion, out of unreasonable pretences of purity and order, where scripture gives no plain rule. Whatever varnish may colour over such practices in this world, yet such humourous and unreasonable disturbers of the peace shall receive no thanks from our Lord Jesus in the great day, whether they be pastors or people.

IV. "When we behold a society of christians flourishing in holiness and honourably maintaining the beauty of this sacred fellowship, let us take occasion to raise our thoughts to the heavenly world, to the *church of the first-born, who are assembled on high*, where everlasting beauty, order, peace, and holiness, are maintained in the presence of Jesus our common Lord. And "when we meet with little inconveniences, uneasiness, and contest in any church of Christ on earth, let us point our thoughts and our hopes still upward to that divine fellowship of the saints, and the spirits of the just made perfect, where contention and disorder have no place." There the glories and the graces of the Redeemer, who is the head of the church, are diffused over all the happy assembly: They adore and love their God and their Saviour with supreme fervency, and they love one another with pure affection; their hearts and souls are one, and they rejoice in the love of God, and in the presence of the Lamb for ever.

SERMON LIV.*

TO ENCOURAGE THE REFORMATION OF MANNERS.

EXODUS xvii. 11.

AND IT CAME TO PASS, WHEN MOSES HELD UP HIS HAND, THAT ISRAEL PREVAILED; AND WHEN HE LET DOWN HIS HAND, AMALEK PREVAILED.

THOUGH the design of my discourse be derived from this sentence in the history, yet it is necessary that the scene of the whole action be drawn, and the field of battle spread before us; then we shall see this passage in its true light, and the discourse will proceed in a more regular conformity to the words; nor can I describe the fight with Amalek so well as Moses has done: Let us read the account which this ancient and divine historian has given, beginning at the eighth verse.

Verse 8. *Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim.* 9. *And Moses said unto Joshua, choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: To-morrow I will stand on the top of the hill, with the rod of God in my hand.* 10. *So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.* 11. *And it came to pass when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.* 12. *But Moses' hands were heavy, and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon: And Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.* 13. *And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.* 14. *And the Lord said unto Moses, write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: For I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.* 15. *And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi, that is, the Lord is my banner.* 16. *For he said, because the Lord has sworn, that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.*

Not only the ceremonies of the Jewish church, but the civil affairs of that nation, in many instances, were typical of the christian state: Their release from the house of bondage, and their march through the wilderness to Canaan was a shadow of our rescue from the slavery of sin, and our travels through this desert world to the heavenly country. Their rebellions and murmurings, their fiery serpents and destructive plagues which swept them away by thousands, were but a figure of our sins and sorrows, our backslidings and divine judgments. This is evident to those who will read and believe what St. Paul writes to the Corinthians; 1 *Cor.* x. 1—11. Where, after he had briefly recounted their transgressions and punishments, he asserts verse 11. that *all these things happened unto them for examples*, or types, as it is in the original; or these things fell

* Preached at Salter's-Hall, to the Societies for Reformation of Manners, in the Cities of London and Westminster, October 6th, 1707.

out typically, τυπικῶς, as the Alexandrine manuscript in the royal library bids us read it; *and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.*

The enemies they met with in their way, represent those sinners that vex the christian church in its journey through this mortal state; and Amalek may well figure out the biggest impieties, the most daring and profane wretches, against whom it concerns a christian to make his utmost efforts: For these were the people that came first out against Israel, just after their escape from the hand of Pharaoh: They came out with violence and without any provocation; they were those against whom the *Lord sware he would have everlasting war*, verse 16. or such whose *hand was lifted up against the throne of the Lord*, as some translate this phrase. It is a description of sins and sinners of a bold and impious character, that fight directly against heaven and holiness, against the light of nature and the laws of God and nations: Such as the Lord hath resolved that *the remembrance of them shall utterly be blotted out*, verse 14.

It is against such iniquities and such transgressors, immoralities and wickednesses of the biggest size, that you have taken up arms, who appoint and attend this season of worship; and my soul shall rejoice if ye may be this day animated to pursue the war. Now let us take a survey of the several persons that are placed in their proper posts and offices in this warfare against Amalek. Here is Moses, Aaron, and Hur, Joshua, and the chosen men of Israel.

Moses the lawgiver, the supreme magistrate: *He was king in Jeshuron when the heads of the people and the tribes of Israel were gathered together;* Deut. xxxiii. 4, 5. He gave orders to Joshua to fight the Amalekites, while himself stood on the top of the hill, with the rod of God in his hand. This may be called a rod of authority and command, whereby his orders were continued: It was a sceptre in the hand of Moses, and the most powerful one that ever was held by a prince: It was a rod for signal, like an ensign or banner to encourage the soldiers: It was a rod of faith, for by faith alone it could produce wonders: Wonders of destruction upon Egypt, wonders of division upon rocks and Red seas, wonders of deliverance for Israel, and all this without any natural force of its own; for it received all its power from faith, and from the presence of divinity with it. It was lifted up constantly from an eminent place where Moses stood, whence the holy army might see it, and obey orders, and renew their courage in battle. Though the hands of Moses seem to have been lifted up alternately, and not together, yet because the lifting up of the hands sometimes in scripture signifies prayer, therefore the constant fervency of intercession may be also implied here; and no doubt but these earnest requests to heaven, which this man of God offered upon the mount, while the people were fighting below, had a mighty influence on the labour and success of the day.

Blessed be God, we have a Moses in the midst of us on the top of the hill, a queen of a manly soul upon the throne of our British Israel: She has by her royal proclamations given order to fight with Amalek, to oppose and suppress the armies of iniquity: She still holds up the rod of command; and it may be well called the rod of God, not only because all authority is derived from God as the original source of government; but because here it is held up in his quarrel too. It shall be called a rod of faith and of power, for it has wrought wonders at a distance: This the fields of Blenheim witness, and the plains of Ramillies; wonders of rescue for the German empire, and wonders of liberty for mankind. Her hand is still stretched out against the enemies of heaven at home and abroad; and we have still reason to believe, that it is lifted up in addresses to heaven by

faith and prayer, that all the adversaries of the Lord may be overcome. Oh! may her life be precious in the sight of the Lord, and guarded by the angel of the covenant, as the life of Moses was! May her days be many, as the days of Moses! *Deut.* xxxiv. 7. May her eye never grow dim to the true interest of our Israel, nor her natural force and resolution to fight the battles of the Lord be ever abated!

Aaron is the next person mentioned here, Aaron the High-priest, though perhaps he was not at this time invested with that office, yet being designed for it, we may take him now under this character; he was to assist Moses in bearing up his hand on the one side, as Hur on the other: We have also the ministers of the gospel in our age attending this holy warfare: Those whom the favour of her majesty hath advanced near to her royal person support her hands in this design, encourage her zeal to lift up this standard against sin, and assist her to pray for victory: Nor are these who lie at a distance from the throne, but still within the verge and shadow of its protection, less zealous in their assistance of the war, or less fervent in pleading with God for success. Oh! may our Aarons never grow weary of encouraging the work of reformation, and giving their utmost aid to the pious design of our supreme magistrate! May they still revive and quicken the languishing diligence of all that have engaged in the same cause! And wheresoever men are joined in societies, to build the house of God, or to demolish the houses of Satan, there let it be always said, that *with them are the prophets of God helping them;* Ezra v. 2.

Hur follows the mention of Aaron, and his post is to support the other hand of Moses against Amalek: His character seems to be a prudent man, and a considerable counsellor; *Exod.* xxiv. 14. when Moses left the camp of Israel for a season, *behold,* saith he to the people, *Aaron and Hur are with you; if any man have any matters to do, let him come unto them.* The rod of power lifted up by the civil magistrate must be well managed by the hand of zeal, and the hand of prudence. Ministers and counsellors are the supports on each side to exhort to the work, and advise the best methods of performance. All persons and societies that are contriving means of reformation, fall under the character of Hur; such are those gentlemen who have formed a scheme for carrying on war with sin and sinners, and brought their methods to a regularity and consistence; they have made the execution of them practicable, and much easier than at first. Our praises are due to the God of wisdom that such men are found in the nation; that the prudent man is not cut off, nor the counsellor perished from amongst us: Oh! may their pious consultations be continued in their stated seasons! May they be executed with daily vigour, and attended with growing success!

Joshua is the chief person concerned in the execution of these orders of battle against Amalek; he ventures into the field, and fights the enemy. The inferior magistrates of every kind and degree bear a resemblance to his office, and should wear the image of his Spirit; courage and resolution becomes each of you that act according to the several ranks of your authority; fear not the rage nor the threats of Amalek, of the most profligate and haughty sinners; remember you have the warrant of Moses for what you do: The supreme magistrate ceases not to lift up the rod.

The chosen men of Israel are the last characters I take notice of here; they assist Joshua in the performance of his divine orders; such are those brave and generous spirits, whether of larger or meaner outward circumstances, who pursue sin and sinners

with the peril of their lives, and lead them captive to courts of justice that they may be punished. In vain had Joshua received his commands for battle, if no man of Israel had ventured into the field to assist him; had he went alone, perhaps he might have slain a few enemies, and then perished himself; in vain would a magistrate attempt to suppress a nation of sinners if he had none to aid him; but few, very few can come under the notice of his own eyes, and by the fear of numbers he might well be discouraged from punishing those few. If there were none to discover the enemies, or to guard himself, he could scarce fulfil the sentence of the law against them; but when Moses, Aaron and Hur, Joshua and the chosen men, all stand firm and maintain their posts, then Amalek is discomfited, and a nation of sinners rooted out.

There was a time indeed, when Moses upon the banks of the Red-sea said to the people, *Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord;* Exod. xiv. 13. And they stood still and the salvation appeared: But God doth not always work miracles of deliverance without the use of instruments: Here Joshua and Israel are required to take up arms for their own defence; and if the captains or the soldiers had fled from the battle, Amalek had prevailed as well as if Moses had ceased to lift up his hand. I may venture then to lay down this great truth as the foundation of my following discourse: "When a war with sin is begun in a nation, it must be carried on without ceasing, or iniquity will prevail." Every one must stand to his post and fulfil his charge, lest the troops of the reformation be routed, and sin with all its legions overspread the country.

To render this proposition more evident to the mind, and more powerful over the will, I shall take this method:

I. Prove that sin will prevail, if the war be neglected which you have happily begun, and carried on thus far.

II. Set before you some of the dreadful consequents of prevailing iniquity.

III. Remove the discouragements that may be ready to make your hands hang down in this work.

IV. By a few encouraging hints, endeavour to raise any that are sinking, and to strengthen all your resolutions in this glorious service to God and your country.

First, We may prove that iniquity will prevail if the war be neglected, by these three considerations:

I. Consider that the nature of fallen man is turned aside from God, averse to all that is holy, and prone to wickedness: And if divine grace doth not renew the heart, the life will grow old in transgression, and abound in guilt. Where the root is bitterness, and the tree vice, every branch that is not cut off will increase and multiply in fruits of poison and death; for *a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit*, if we believe the words of our Saviour; *Luke* vi. 43. And St. Paul affirms, *that evil men wax worse and worse;* 2 Tim. iii. 13. *Conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity*, is our original character; *Psalm* li. 5. And infants *go astray from the womb*, as soon as they be born, *speaking lies;* Psalm lviii. 3. Sin enlarges itself with the stature, and gets strength with age; and where there are no methods of check or restraint, the children of Adam grow up to giants in wickedness. Our daily observation confirms the divine remark of Solomon; Eccles. viii. 11. *because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil:* The late discourse on these words demands my review, and I think it may deserve yours.

Besides, while man is unregenerate and under the full dominion of sin, he takes

occasion from the blessings of heaven to increase in wantonness. Peace and plenty are abused to excite luxury and lust; and the mercies of God are turned into weapons of rebellion to fight against him. It is the nature of some serpents to turn the sweetest food they eat into venom; and where distempered humours reign in the body, the richest provisions nourish the disease, and advance the mischief. Such was the sin of Sodom; I mourn that in our nation we have any reason to say our sister Sodom. Let us read *Ezek.* xvi. 48, 49, 50. with fear and trembling. The Lord swears concerning a city that had as many outward characters of holiness upon it, as London can pretend to, that she had rivalled and exceeded that lewd and infamous people. *As I live, saith the Lord God, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters. Behold this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her, and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy: And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me; therefore I took them away, as I saw good.* Oh! that the provinces of Great Britain may never follow the vile example! That London had never known her sins, or may root them out speedily, lest she be partaker of the same fiery vengeance.

II. Consider the abounding of iniquity before you began this work of reformation, and this will convince you that it will abound again, if the work cease. Though perhaps some particular sins were not so much talked of before, yet sinners of various kinds were much more numerous, more public and more shameless. The streets rung with oaths and blasphemy; the taverns were nightly witnesses of lust and drunkenness; open houses of abomination were maintained with many inhabitants, and the fields were polluted with lewdness in the very face of heaven, in the sight of the sun or stars. But those who have been engaged in cleansing this sink of sin, and driving impudent crimes into dark corners, those who have fought against the powers of darkness with so great success, can enlarge on this reflection plentifully. You may most effectually convince yourselves that crimes will grow numerous and shameless again, if you forbear the prosecution.

III. Consider that sinners are provoked and irritated by war proclaimed against them; their rage is double, and they will use their utmost efforts to revenge by augmenting their forces and their crimes; poor revenge, that rebounds against themselves with fiercer violence, and shoots the sting deeper into their own hearts; that treasures up more wrath for their own souls, and bigger measures of damnation! Praised be the Lord, that this their rage is impotent, while the men of reformation maintain the war; *Though the wicked join hand in hand, yet they are not unpunished;* Prov. xi. 21. But you have awakened their malice, so that you may expect abounding villanies, if you cease to resist them.

Some foolish men indeed have unjustly made this your reproach, and cry out, "It is you have provoked them to break out into unknown and uncommon wickedness, by shutting up all the avenues of common sins." But this is a charge very hard to be proved; for it is possible that the same wickedness was practised before, though discovered but of late by your industry and courage. The rising sun must not be charged with the scenes of blood and murder, which it only reveals. Besides, were such sins seldom committed before, yet it does by no means follow that reformation is the cause of them now: I believe there were no reformers in Sodom; or if there were, surely Lot

must be one: Now Lot through the prevalence of fear was once tempted to expose his daughters, and permit a common sin, but this did not restrain the people from their mad pursuit of unnatural violence.

After all, if this accusation were true, yet I would ask these men who reproach you thus, whether they themselves would freely indulge and cherish the eggs of a cockatrice in their house, lest while they are crushing them, now and then a scorpion should creep out, or a fiery serpent fly abroad? Would they themselves willingly sleep with a nest of hornets in their bed, lest by rousing them they should stir up their rage, and make their stings more angry and venomous? Is it not far better to disturb the nest, that they may be unstung and destroyed for ever? But when the nest is disturbed, you must not sleep till you have destroyed them; remember they will give you no quarter, and therefore you must give them none.

The *second* thing proposed, is to shew you what will be the dreadful consequents of prevailing iniquity: But what tongue can sufficiently describe them, or what ears endure the description? When sin reigns and triumphs over a nation, the consequences are fatal and infinite, ruinous and everlasting. The destruction extends far, it reaches to the flesh and spirit, it involves posterity with the present age, and has a terrible influence upon all the evils of the world to come; if we take but a little prospect of a few of them, it may serve to awaken our fear, and provoke our drowsy zeal to activity that we may prevent them.

I. Great dishonour to the name of God, and perpetual affronts to the Divine Majesty will abound amongst us. If Amalek prevail, the God of Israel will be blasphemed. If the authority of man and human punishments, which are visible and sensible, be not employed to restrain sinners, they will grow up to a contempt of the authority of God who is unseen, and despise his most awful threatenings; and because their execution is delayed, his law will be hourly and impudently violated: If magistrates who behold wickedness will not punish it, the all-seeing eye of God will be called in question, and his judgment-seat disbelieved; *how doth God know*, will the wicked say, *can he judge through the dark cloud? Thick clouds are a covering to him that he seeth not, and he walketh in the circuit of the heavens*, that is, afar off, above us, and takes no cognizance of our actions; *Job* xxii. 13, 14. *The fools will say in their hearts there is no God;* Psalm xiv. 1. Then by degrees his providence will become a jest, and all his invisible terrors a matter of derision. Now who is there of us willing to have our ears filled with such language of hell, with public and loud curses against our heavenly Father, our Redeemer, and our Sanctifier? Can we bear to have all that is sacred and divinely dear to us exposed to mockery? All that we infinitely value named with contempt? All that we fear and worship treated with insult and ridicule; When God's holy name and attributes are made the song of the drunkards, our heart may grieve within us, and our consciences will smite us inwardly with a sharp reproach, that we never assisted the reformation: While rivers of tears shall flow down your eyes, your lips will take up this doleful reflection, "Alas! How much share have I in the guilt of these wild and open blasphemies of my God, because I never did any thing to prevent them."

II. Universal difficulties and discouragements will attend the practice and profession of piety; for the more men improve in wickedness themselves, the more will they hate all appearance of religion in others; *and they that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall be sure to suffer persecution;* 2 Tim. iii. 12. When *the fools have said in their hearts there*

is no God, they will eat up his people as they eat bread; Psalm xiv. 4. All religious discourse shall be banished from conversation, and be put out of countenance with bitter raillery: This indeed is already too frequent, and pious conference is almost forbidden amongst us: But if sin further prevail, godliness will be afraid to appear in any of its forms; virtue must hide its head, and religion will be driven into corners. Profaneness has grown so bold these forty years and more, that a saint has been a word of scoff and reproach; in due time, every thing that looks serious will become a scandal; and if there be any righteous Lots amongst us, their *souls will be vexed with the impure conversation of sinners;* 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8. A man shall hardly be able to attend upon the public worship of God, but he must receive abuses in his way thither; the highway of holiness will be unoccupied, the travellers to Zion will be forced to walk in by-paths, and the frequenters of the house of God will *cease in our Israel;* Judges v. 6, 12, 13. but I hope our *Deborah is risen, she is risen a mother in Israel to prevent it: Awake, awake, Barak,* arise every son of courage and authority, every man of prudence and zeal, *arise, and lead this captivity captive; the Lord make you to have dominion over those mighty iniquities that would destroy all religion.*

III. From the discouragements that will attend on the ways of God, a great decay of piety will ensue among some of the serious professors of it; Continual molestations will weary out the spirits of christians in a great degree, *and because iniquity abounds, the love of many will wax cold;* Matt. xxiv. 12. Now who of us is willing to bear this reflection, "religion is almost driven out of the land, and I have done little to keep it in: Godliness is baffled and lost, and I had not courage enough to stand up for God amongst the men of reformation: Amalek has beaten Israel out of the field, and I never drew sword against that cursed nation; or when I had struck a stroke or two I laid down my arms, and suffered Amalek to prevail."

IV. It will be a scandal to our country to suffer sin to grow rampant and sovereign in the midst of us; we shall bring a scandal upon the gospel that we profess, and a dishonour upon the holy name of christians that we bear: If the sins of heathenism multiply amongst us, we shall be a reproach to the christian faith. Have we no tenderness for the name of Christ? Shall we permit him to be accounted a minister of sin by suffering the works of the devil, which he destroyed, to be built up again by bold transgressors? Bold men indeed, that sin against the light of nature under the shining revelations of grace! In vain have we been famed for light and knowledge, in vain for piety and experimental godliness in the days of our fathers, but now we grow a by-word among the nations, and an impure proverb: He swears like a Briton, he is as drunk as an Englishman, as lewd and profane as a Londoner: Surely it will not be very grateful to our ears, if such odious forms of speech should arise in neighbour-kingdoms. *Righteousness indeed exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.* Prov. xiv. 34.

V. Not reproaches only will attend us, but real and multiplied mischiefs will afflict our civil interest, public and private. The public affairs of a nation must suffer certain detriment where wickedness roves loose and unrestrained: If the floodgates of sin are opened, confusion will rush into the government like a deluge. Men that break the bonds of natural religion and of morality without controul, will grow lawless and ungovernable: When the yoke of a God and of natural conscience is shaken off publicly, the gentlest yoke of man will not be long endured; they will stand at defiance with the best of governments, they are fit tinder to receive every spark of ambition, they are

ready for insurrection and public tumult: It is not religion, but wild enthusiasm or immorality, that sow the seeds of treason, and turn subjects into rebels. If I might address any of the inferior governors of the nation, I would say, are you willing that your authority should be mocked, and your forms of power and justice be made a laughing-stock? Are you willing that your seats of judgment should be insulted and thrown down? If not, see that you maintain them, by pronouncing sentence upon the wicked, and take care that it be executed; let it be done with speed, lest the contagion of vice spread amongst numbers, and grow too mighty to be subdued: Wickedness burns as the fire, and sometimes it flies suddenly through a community, as a flame through the trees of the forest, or through the buildings of a city, if timely care be not taken to extinguish it; it spreads like a young gangrene; if the limb affected be not cut off, the vital powers will quickly be too weak to resist the growing mischief. Let justice be exercised toward bold transgressors, for justice sometimes *preserves the king as well as mercy and truth: and though his throne is said to be upholden by mercy, yet a wise king scattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them;* Prov. xx. 26, 28.

Private families and particular persons will very sensibly suffer in their health, in their estates, and in other comforts of life, if iniquity abound. *Whoredom, wine and new wine, take away the heart;* Hos. iv. 11. that is, waste the understanding of men, and turn them into fools and idolaters, as the next words explain it; which in our language signifies, that lust and drunkenness weaken the minds of men, blind their consciences, and make atheists of them. I need not mention the *wound and the dishonour that such sinners shall get, and the reproach which shall not be wiped away;* Prov. vi. 33. for the foregoing verses speak something more dreadful, *the adulteress will hunt for the precious life; he that practises this sin lacketh understanding, for he destroys his own soul:* verses 26, 32. Fathers, what will you say when you see your children debauched in their principles, and ruined by uncleanness; When you find atheism prevail in their hearts, and irreligion in their lives; When they break the bars of paternal government and will no more be reproved? When they overleap all the fences of restraining grace, and make haste to perdition? This they have learned of those evil companions whom you never endeavoured to reform by just punishment. What will you say, fathers, when you follow your sons to an untimely grave, and putrefaction enters into their bones before the season; you that never did any thing to stop this growing plague among those who have infected your own children? What will you say, fathers, when you see your young heirs, now grown up to the size of your hopes and wishes, seized and drawn away to execution and the gibbet, for crimes which you never took care to suppress in other men? Mothers, what will ye say—but I must forbear to address the tender sex in such accents of prophetic sorrow; to present your eyes with such prospects as these would touch your passions too sensibly; it would make the wound in your souls too deep, and melt you into tears; let a glimpse of such mournful scenes excite you to contribute something towards the general reformation. Ye wealthy citizens, the time may come when you shall be scarce secure in your own dwellings, but be robbed of your treasures by nightly villains that will satisfy their lusts by rapine, and make provision for their flesh by plunder and violence; You will confess the judgment of God is just in it, though the sin of man be great; for that you never gave one penny to carry on the wars of the Lord with Amalek. The Amalekites have now fallen upon you, and rifled you of many a pound.

VI. Fearful judgments from God will ensue; *For the wrath of God will be revealed*

from heaven, sooner or later, *against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men;* Rom. i. 18. Fire and brimstone may come down upon an island as well as upon the cities of the plain; other countries are capable of burning eruptions besides Naples and Sicily, and the dominions of antichrist; with the breath of his mouth the Lord can raise an earthquake that shall sink Great Britain into the sea, and it shall be found no more. Perhaps God may be now, as it were, arguing the case as with Ephraim and with Israel of old; Hos. xi. 8. *How shall I give thee up*, London? How shall I deliver thee, Westminster? *How shall I make thee as Admah?* How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Which were twin sisters of Sodom and Gomorrah, and involved in the same vengeance; *Gen.* xiv. and xix. 24, 25. *Oh! that the heart of the Lord may be turned within him, and his repentings kindled together, that he may not execute the fierceness of his anger!* Yet let not us say peace to ourselves, if unrestrained villanies abound amongst us: Why should England be so fond and partial to itself, as to believe that it shall be privileged by heaven above all kingdoms in all ages? Why should we flatter ourselves that we only shall be indulged to sin with a high hand, and without punishment? We hate the doctrine of indulgences, and yet we act as under the influence of such a persuasion. Shall the countries around us drink of the cup of his indignation with various mixture, and we still be excused from tasting? The Lord of hosts has many armies of judgment and desolation at his command; the variety of plagues on Egypt is not a thousandth part of his artillery, nor of the kinds of terrors that are treasured in his magazines; he can draw his sword of pestilence, and give it this commission, *Go and slay a third part of men;* he can send the sword of our enemies amongst us, who will neither spare nor pity; he can let France in upon us like a flood, and Lewis XIV. will be as zealous a servant of the Lord in such work, as Nebuchadnezzar was when God sent him to *punish Jerusalem and the nations;* Jer. xxv. 9. When the French dragoons insult us, and our necks are put under the feet of our enemies, we may then, perhaps, remember and repent that we did not arise for the Lord against evil-doers, and tread down the enemies of his holiness.

Or, if the thunders of God lie still for a season, and his lightnings be not kindled; if plagues, and famines, and foreign armies, be restrained from our coasts, and peace and plenty dwell in our borders; God has judgments of a severer kind to inflict upon us, though they are more silent, and less affect our senses. He can give us up to the lusts of our own heart, and send judicial blindness: He can consign us over to the power of Satan, to our beloved lethargy and spiritual death: He can suffer the devil *to sear our consciences*, and to inspire us from hell to *work all uncleanness with greediness;* Eph. iv. 19. Our understandings may be sold into the hands of strong delusions, and the wisest of us be left to believe a lie; or God may continue the messengers of his gospel in the midst of us, but give them a new commission, even that which he gave to the prophet Isaiah for Israel, that a curse shall attend our exercises of divine worship: A drop of this sort of vengeance lighting on us, *will turn our eyes into darkness, and our hearts into nether mill-stones; and after all this, his full indignation may be poured out upon the land, in most sensible instances, nor his anger be turned away from us, but his hand stretched out still.* Thus he dealt with the Jews his own people: let us read it, and fear the parallel. Isaiah vi. 10, 11. *Go, make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with*

their heart, and convert and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate. The foregoing chapters will inform us of the sins that procured this threatening, it will be well if we do not find our names or characters there.

I must not break off this part of my discourse without mention of the final consequent of prevailing iniquity, and that is, that the inhabitants of such a nation shall go down to hell by thousands; and England, that *hath been lifted up to heaven* by divine favours, shall *be thrust down* to the bottomless pit for her aggravated abominations. Eternal *death is the wages of sin;* Rom. vi. 23. and can we bear this thought, that the place of torment shall be thronged with our neighbours and acquaintance, and the dominions of hell peopled out of the land of our nativity? *Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision, when the heathens shall be awakened, when the Lord shall sit there to judge the nations round about;* Joel iii. 12, 14. What a terrible forethought is it, if almost all England should be placed at the left-hand of the Judge in that day, and fall under the sentence, *Depart, ye cursed!* And perhaps numbers of our own kindred, ruined by the growing vices of the nation, shall stand amongst the guilty, and expect the vengeance. Let a natural compassion touch our hearts here, and move us, by proper methods, to put a stop to spreading wickedness. Let us use our utmost efforts to quench that fire which will burn to the lowest hell.

The *third* proposal was to mention the discouragements that attend this work of reformation, and try to remove them.

I. Reproaches and scandals have been cast plentifully upon the societies for reformation: These are ready to sink the spirits of such as are engaged in the work, and affright others from joining their assistance. But have you *so learned Christ*, as to shrink at his service, and retire because *the world hates you*, and gives you ill language? *Consider the Captain of your salvation*, what a sea of malice and reproach he passed through, when he came down from heaven to take upon him the work of a reformer; the gentiles had woefully darkened and lost the light of nature; and the Jews wretchedly corrupted the law of God when he came into the world: His business was to restore religion, *to destroy the works of the devil*, and repair the ruins of mankind. This was his blessed errand and design; yet wheresoever he went, slander, with all her tongues, stood ready to assault him; he was abused with the odious names of *a glutton and a wine bibber*. His own nation cry out against him, *He hath a devil, and is mad;* John x. 20. Are ye not willing to follow so glorious a leader *through honour and dishonour, through good report and bad report*, especially when he employs you in his own work too? *Consider him who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, and despised the shame*, as well *as endured the cross, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds;* Heb. xii. 2, 3. And consider that most encouraging discourse which ye have heard on this text. The prophets, the apostles, the martyrs and confessors, have even been the reformers of the age in which they lived: And are we ashamed to have our names inserted in this noble catalogue? The reformers of doctrine since the days of popery are mentioned with everlasting honour; and why should a reformer of lives and manners be reckoned a scandalous title? But let us examine these scandals a little more particularly, that, by discovering the injustice, the impudence, and falsehood that is mingled with them, you may learn to despise them all.

They say, *Ye are busy bodies:* It is the magistrate's place to punish vice; it is his work to put the laws in execution, and not yours. Answer them, that ye are but assist-

ants to the magistrate in that work; and all her majesty's subjects are required to assist persons in authority in the discharge of their office. How could a magistrate punish sin, or execute the penalties of the law, if no criminals were found out, and seized, and brought before him? It becomes, therefore, every good subject of the queen, every lover of his country, and every servant of the living God, to lend his hand to this work: You are not called to the uncharitable and antichristian task of afflicting tender consciences for different sentiments in religion. Prince and people are well agreed that violence is not the true method of promoting the gospel of peace. Conscience is not so much as pretended by the sinners which you prosecute; they are common nuisances, and the reformation of them is a public benefit to mankind.

2. They cry out upon you as severe, and cruel, and uncompassionate; that you deal hardly with your neighbours, by bringing them to public justice. Here I am bold to answer for you, that it is uneasy and self-denying work, and that you had rather be employed in propagating virtue by milder methods, if they might but obtain success. Here I must also ask liberty to say for myself, that it is an unpleasing task to me to excite you to accuse even your vicious neighbours, and awaken the rod of the magistrate to punish them: But I am convinced of the necessity of carrying on this sort of war against sinners, lest the whole nation become a field of wickedness. I had rather, much rather, preach *the gospel of the grace of God*, and that large forgiveness of his which *hides a multitude of sins:* I had rather be relating to you divine histories, how the accuser of the brethren has been overcome by *the blood of the Lamb.* But when *the dragon and his angels* raise a war in a christian kingdom, *Michael and his angels* must fight too, and sometimes it is necessary to use the weapons of civil authority against them. I was constrained to this kind of discourse, after I had meditated a gentler subject, by several gentlemen of your number providentially assuring me, there was never more need of severe discipline than now; for that you had lately discovered many assemblies of unnatural lust, and the fatal contagion was spreading among multitudes. You desired me to excite you all to a vigorous and mortal pursuit of wickedness in all its private haunts and corners, that it might be brought to light, and be rooted out for ever.

But I return to answer the accusation brought against you of cruelty and unkindness: So may a surgeon be called unkind and cruel, whose design is to heal; but a dangerous tumour, or a latent ulcer, first demands the incision-knife, or the actual cautery; cutting and burning must be the first and immediate work, that the dead flesh or the callus may be removed, and a way made for healing medicines. Punishment is to be inflicted on those on whom persuasion has no force. There are some sinners whose consciences are wrapped in scales of hardness, and the sword of the magistrate is the only instrument that can make way to the sensible and tender part, if any such remain within: Then perhaps the thoughts of a God or a hell may have some influence to reclaim, and the promises and graces of the gospel be successfully preached and administered to allure them to piety. This sort of cruelty is an instance of the truest kindness. Our Lord Christ himself, who was love incarnate, and preached the gospel of peace, yet once saw reason to practise punishing zeal, when *he overturned the tables of the money-changers, and scourged* the profane sheep-merchants *out of the temple;* John ii. 15. Thus the God-man, whose compassion to sinners was *stronger than death*, exercised his anger and resentment against the breakers of the laws of heaven and his country, and the trans-

gressors were whipped and fined. Severe justice toward single sinners is sometimes made by divine grace a blessed method of their own salvation; and if it appear hard in some particular instances, and should not effectually reduce the transgressor, yet it is often found of necessary and happy use for the welfare of a whole community, by deterring others from the same crimes.

3. They complain that you are "partial, and have a respect of persons. Some you prosecute without mercy, and you indulge an escape to others who are equally criminal." Answer them that you pursue vice impartially, wheresoever you find it, and that you follow those methods that may most effectually reclaim mankind. Tell them that you make no distinction between transgressors of high or low degree; you put no difference between the guilty, whether they belong to your own party and profession, or to another. Assure them, that in this case you are unwilling to know a friend or a brother, even as the sons of Levi, when they *girded on their swords in the camp of Israel, and consecrated themselves that day to the Lord, every man upon his companion, his neighbour, his brother, and his son;* Ex. xxxii. 26, 27, 29. But the apostle Jude seems to direct you to make a difference in other respects with compassion and fear, treating those more severely *that are mockers and sensualists, walking after their own ungodly lusts;* Jude 18, 19, 22. The very design of the work of reformation seems to require that a distinction be made between young and old offenders, between the bashful and the impudent, the trembling transgressor and the obstinate wretch, that has no sense of guilt or shame: Some may be reclaimed for ever, by one admonition or reproof, others must be sharply chastised to make them feel conviction. Yet it needs divine prudence to practise these directions aright; and sometimes you must be forced to make no distinction at all where nature and virtue seem to desire one, lest the enemy should take occasion to revile your conduct. May the God of wisdom and counsel be ever near you, and direct you to pursue your glorious designs by the most successful and irreproachable methods!

4. You are charged with tempting others to sin that you may accuse them. But this slander is so malicious, and so inconsistent with your design, that your enemies can persuade but few to believe it. The standing rules of your societies bear witness against it, and your constant practice refutes the lie. It is easy to accuse in general, and fling impudent falsehoods in gross upon the fairest reputation; but you have made frequent and bold appeals to your reproachers, and none of them have been able to fasten the charge by any particular proof upon any of the members of your societies.

Affronts and railings you must sometimes expect to meet with: *blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and speak all manner of evil against you falsely for the sake of Christ and his name; rejoice and be exceeding glad;* Matt. v. 11. Bind the reproaches of Christ to you, as your ornament and glory. Go on dauntless against such oppositions. If you know how to encounter these I have mentioned with courage, you may contemn all the rest. Adore that God that has kept the honour of your societies hitherto; and so supported their credit, that the spite of all the powers of darkness, and the smoke of hell, hath not been able to sully your reputation, or sink your esteem amongst the men of wisdom and virtue.

II. Another discouragement you meet with proceeds from the magistrates. Some of the inferior rank refuse to assist you in seizing the criminals whom you have discovered: And some in higher stations, that should punish the vicious, rather browbeat and discountenance the reformers. But our God be praised, that there are some of higher

and lower rank that join their hearts and their hands with yours. Their zeal and power are engaged in the wars of the Lord against sin: May their names be honoured upon earth, and their reward be great in heaven! But let such as appear on the side of sin blush, and be ashamed that they should use the authority which they receive from God, to countenance or favour the enemies of his holiness: Let them know that there is *a higher than the highest on earth*, that *beholds the perverting of justice and judgment in a province;* Eccles. v. 8. Let them be put in mind of that awful judgment-seat, before which all mankind must stand upon a level; where their commissions cease for ever, and their distinguishing ranks of place and power are known no more. Though it hath been said, *ye are gods, yet ye shall die as men;* Psalm lxxxii. 6. Remember therefore the tribunal to which you must give up an account of your magistracy. What will you say to the Judge, *whose eyes are a flame of fire*, when he shall demand of you, did *ye indeed speak righteousness on earth? Did ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men?* Psalm lviii. 1. Have ye stood *for the praise of them that do well*, and been *a terror to evil-doers*, or have you *bore the sword in vain?* Wherein have ye appeared the *ministers of God*, if ye have never *executed wrath upon him that doth evil?* Rom. xiii. 3, 4. Then shall the sentence of the Lord go forth against those that have justified the wicked for cowardice, or for covetousness. For to *justify the wicked is an equal abomination in the sight of God as to condemn the righteous;* Prov. xvii. 15.

III. The loss of time and the expence of money in the prosecution of vice through the courts of justice, is more than your private circumstances will bear. This I confess is a discouragement to some, but we may find some relief for it. It is true you are not to neglect the necessary duties that you owe to your families, and let your own household starve, while you are endeavouring to ruin the household of Satan. But there are many leisure hours of life that may be employed in this holy warfare; and the time spent in this service will turn to good account in the days of eternity. As for the expence of money which is necessary to carry on this war, there are some hundreds of gentlemen and ladies in the present assembly that can answer this objection much better than I. My best method of answering it is, but to persuade you, my honoured friends, to attempt and try what you can do towards it. One line under your hands, or a single item in your will, is an answer more to the purpose than whole sheets of my writing, or than if I should continue my discourse till the sun go down. The charge of the prosecution of lewd houses is very great, as I am informed, and had the societies more assistance of this kind, the reformation would be carried on more sensibly. Let me address the richer part of this audience: Will it not be a joyful prospect on your dying bed to think that the battle grows strong against sin when your heads lie down in the dust, and that by means of the sinews you have added to the war in your last testament? Will it not be a hopeful evidence of your hatred of sin, that you contend against it, even in the grave, and maintain an everlasting fight.

IV. The danger and risk of life in this cause is another discouragement: But was there ever any war without danger, or victory without courage? Besides, the perils you run here are almost infinitely less than those which attend the wars of nations, where the cause is not half so divine. The fields of battle in Flanders, and almost all over Europe, have drunk up the blood of millions, and have furnished graves for large armies; but it can hardly be said that you have hitherto *resisted unto blood striving against sin;* Heb. xii. 4. In a war of more than twelve years continuance there has but one man fallen.

The providence of God has put helmets of salvation upon your heads. Some of you can relate wonders of deliverance and safety when you have been beset by numbers, and their rage has kindled into resolutions of revenge: the Lord has taken away their courage in a moment, the *men of might have not found their hands;* thus he has caused *even the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of wrath he hath restrained;* Psalm lxxvi. 5, 10. Read over this psalm, and with divine valour pursue the fight. But if your life should be lost in such a cause as this, it will be esteemed martyrdom in the sight of God, and shall be thus written down in the book of the wars of the Lord. Believe me, these red lines will look well in the records of heaven, when the judgment shall be set, and the books opened in the face of men and angels.

The FOURTH head of my discourse shall address you with some hints of encouragement, and I shall not much enlarge upon them, since a review of the excellent sermons that have been published on this occasion may administer to you more spirits and vigour to promote this reforming work, this war with national iniquities. Consider,

First, What abundant success you have already had in these pious labours; you have seen part of your hopes already accomplished. Wickedness is put out of countenance: Impiety is not so public as once it was, nor religion so much affronted: We may now walk the whole length of the city, and our ears not be afflicted with one oath or blasphemy. There are not so many violations of decency in the streets, nor inroads upon modesty and honour. Virtue is not so much ashamed to appear as once it was, nor afraid to wear its own colours. The remainder of your work is attended with greater ease: You have been successful in the first onset, proceed then with pleasure, and finish the glorious war. Let others be encouraged to list themselves in this service, which is now grown more tolerable since the forerunners have broke down the strongest bars of difficulty, have made rough ways plain for those that follow, and have borne the burden and heat of the day. Consider again,

Secondly, What an influence you have had to save the nation from overflowing iniquities, and perhaps also from overflowing scourges. Surely you have been some of those that have mourned in secret for all the abominations that were done in former years in the midst of the land, and no doubt there is a divine mark set upon your foreheads, which the destroying angel shall read, if ever he be sent *through the midst of the city to slay utterly the old and the young;* Ezek. ix. 4. But ye have been some of those that hitherto have stood in the breach, as Phinehas did, when the anger of the Lord has been breaking in upon the camp of our Israel. *Ye have been zealous for his name sake. Ye have executed judgment, and turned away the wrath of the Lord;* Num. xxv. 11. And as we have reason to believe your interest in the court of heaven has been considerable on the peace of the nation, so it is unknown what valuable service ye have done for particular souls. Perhaps there are some that bless God at this day for the first inward convictions of sin which they received by your providential discovery of their vices. Perhaps there are some now in heaven, whose stupid consciences you first awakened, and made them more susceptible of the impressions of the gospel. Go on then according to the advice of Solomon, Prov. xxiii. 13, 14. *Withhold not correction from the child, for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.* Go on with this design to *convert the sinner from the error of his way.* Thus shall *ye save his soul from death, and* by the discovery of a few; *ye shall hide a multitude of sins;* James v. 20. Consider,

Thirdly, That you are engaged on the side of God, you are fighting his battles, and the inscription of your banner is *Jehovah nissi*. Think on the high honour that he hath bestowed upon you *by translating you out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son*, and employing you in this service. Remember that you were once on the side of sin, and rebels against heaven, *alienated from the life of God, and enemies in your minds by wicked works;* Col. i. 21. O give him the glory of his reconciling and renewing grace; and when you behold sinners wallowing in their pollutions, let each of you cry out with wonder and thankfulness, "Lord, who or what am I, that thou shouldst draw me out of that sink of sin in which the world dwells! That *thou shouldst pluck me as a brand out of the fire!* That thou shouldst make so sweet a difference betwixt me and others, who am *by nature a child of wrath*, even as they! Oh! why was not I suffered *to run to the same excess of riot*, and be exposed to the same punishment and shame!" While you are endeavouring to reclaim others, let your hearts offer up many a grateful sacrifice of praise to God for yourselves: Adore his restraining mercy and recovering love. This will maintain a right frame of spirit within you, and a true tenderness for the souls of those whom you punish: Rest not till you enjoy the brightest and most delightful evidences of regenerating grace in your own souls; this will make all your future labours for God more abundantly pleasant and easy. Consider also,

Fourthly, That God is engaged on your side. He manages his providence, he sends his ministers, his gospel, and his Spirit to reform the nature of men, and to destroy sin from the earth. Be often upon your knees, with your hands lifted up to heaven, and engage the continuance of divine presence with you: Proceed and pray heartily for your own success: Wrestle with God by supplication, that sin, his enemy, may be overcome, and the sinner whom you prosecute may be reduced to piety, and saved in the day of the Lord. Let the hand of prayer never hang down while the rod of battle is lifted up against Amalek, for it is only by divine assistance that ye can prevail. Ye have the blessing of the Lord upon you for your encouragement, and the hearts and prayers of all good men with you, though you have not all their hands. There was a bitter curse of old pronounced by an angel against Meroz, merely for a neglect of the divine warfare; I pray heartily that it may light on none of our heads; Judges v. 23. *Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.* It is much more pleasant to me to read the blessing that follows, and apply it, with a little variation, to our present purpose, verses 24, 26. *Blessed above women shall* Anne our sovereign be; *blessed shall she be above women in the tent*, or on the throne. She puts her hand to the work of reformation, and her right-hand lifts up the rod of God against profaneness and immorality. Blessed are all those that assist her in this work, according to their several ranks and capacities. "My heart, and the hearts of all my fathers and brethren in the ministry, are towards the governors of this city that offer themselves willingly amongst the people for this service. *Bless ye the Lord;* verse 9. Consider,

In the *last* place, for your encouragement, that ye are engaged on the side of certain victory; for sin must be destroyed for ever. The *old serpent that deceives the nations must be cast out.* The *new heavens and the new earth must appear, wherein dwelleth righteousness.* It was doubtless an encouraging word to the Israelites, in all the troubles that ever they met with from Amalek in following ages, that the *Lord himself would have war with that people from generation to generation, and that the name of Amalek should be blotted*

out from under heaven. Though Amalek be the first of the nations, yet his latter end shall be that he perish for ever; Num. xxiv. 20. Therefore the commission of the Lord to Saul ran thus, 1 Sam. xv. 18, 19. *Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. Wherefore then do we not arise, and obey the voice of the Lord,* and contend against obstinate sinners under the banner of our blessed Redeemer? Assurance of conquest should give spirits and courage for the battle. Whosoever *makes war with the Lamb, the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings;* Rev. xvii. 14. *Out of his mouth goes a sharp sword to smite the nations of the ungodly, and on his head are many crowns;* Rev. xix. 12, 15. Cease not then to lift up your hands against iniquity, till it be blotted out from under heaven. *Be ye faithful to the death* in maintaining the war with sin, and *ye shall receive a crown of life and righteousness;* Rev. ii. 10. *Amen.*

THE RELIGIOUS IMPROVEMENT OF PUBLIC EVENTS.

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT BERRY-STREET, JUNE 18, 1727,

ON OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF

OUR LATE GRACIOUS SOVEREIGN, GEORGE I.

AND THE PEACEFUL SUCCESSION OF

HIS PRESENT MAJESTY, GEORGE II.

PREFACE.

WHEN I had just delivered this plain Sermon from the pulpit, it was a great surprize to me to find myself surrounded with importunities to make it more public. Nor can I impute this to any thing but to the affectionate zeal and concern of my auditors about all events that relate to the royal house of Great Britain, and to a mind well prepared by the late important occurrences to receive instructions of piety from a common discourse without art or ornament.

I must acknowledge, that when any great and momentous changes arise in the world, it is my custom, in the course of my ministry, to excite my hearers to a pious notice and improvement of them. And when, upon the death of our late gracious Sovereign, I observed among my acquaintance so just and sincere a joy for the peaceful succession of a protestant prince to the British throne, I was desirous to turn the stream of it into a religious channel, and to awaken their thoughts to a more solemn and distinct observation of the hand of God, both in putting a sudden period to the reign of one excellent king, and the immediate advancement of another: But I have always had an aversion to send any of these composures to the press. I know several of my brethren are much better qualified for such services; and after almost thirty years spent in the ministry, I have never yet published one sermon on such political occasions.

But the requests of many persons multiplied so fast upon me at this time, that I found myself constrained to submit my own inclinations, and resign them up to the power which my friends have over me. Perhaps the voice of the people, in this respect, may be the voice of God.

Had I designed to present the world with a discourse relating to this great event, I think I should have chosen a different text, and taken much more time in the composition. But such as it is, I must now commit it to the candour of my readers; and humbly ask of God to bless my first essay of this kind to the service of the souls of men, that in all occurrences they may learn first to pay a religious veneration to the hand of God, the supreme and eternal King, and then that they may give all due honour to the memory of our deceased royal benefactors, and may yield all affectionate duty and submission to those whom the kind providence of God has been long preparing for the throne, and has now exalted to that sublime dignity and important station. May divine wisdom and mercy ever guide and defend them! May the Almighty God pour out his richest blessings on their royal persons and their issue, in a long and glorious succession, and render them the guards and honours of christianity and Great Britain, so long as the sun and moon endure! *Amen.*

June 23, 1727.

A SERMON.

THE solemn and important occurrences of the last week call us to a serious notice of the hand of God in them: The death of our late gracious Sovereign, and the happy accession of his present Majesty, have diverted my thoughts from the subject which I lately proposed, and have determined me to entertain you this day with the words of the holy prophet.

ISAIAH v. 12.

AND THE HARP AND THE VIOL, THE TABRET AND PIPE, AND WINE ARE IN THEIR FEASTS: BUT THEY REGARD NOT THE WORK OF THE LORD, NEITHER CONSIDER THE OPERATION OF HIS HANDS.

IN the reigns of several of our former princes, we had a just and melancholy apprehension of popish darkness and tyranny breaking in upon us at their death. The peaceful and regular succession of a protestant heir to his father's throne, is such a blessing as hath not been known in Great Britain for a hundred years past:* It might well be expected then that it should be received with universal joy and gladness of heart. The occasion for it is proper and glorious: Nor will I censure the moderate use of a feast, and a song, and instruments of music, to express this inward and becoming joy: Nor doth the prophet, in my text, forbid them as unlawful things; but he gives it as the character of the profane part of mankind, that upon all occasions they give up themselves to sensual merriment, with an utter neglect of the providence of God.

In such events as we behold this day, the man of wisdom and piety looks all around him: He takes a religious notice of the death of a preceding prince, which makes way for the introduction of his successor, and he points his eye to the hand of God in the sudden change of our rulers. The true christian assumes the language of the prophet Daniel with a devout temper of mind, *Blessed be the name of God for ever, for wisdom and might are his: He changeth the times and the seasons, he removeth kings, and he setteth up kings;* Daniel ii. 21. Whereas the formal professors of christianity, or the vicious part of the people, shew their mirth by *enflaming themselves with strong drink; and the harp and the viol are in their feasts, but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands.* This is the crime which the prophet severely reproves, and for which he pronounces divine threatenings in the following verses.

* The last instance of this kind was when Charles the first succeeded his father James the first, in the year 1625; and indeed this was the only one, except when Edward the sixth came to the crown in the room of Henry the eighth, his father.

To make a right improvement of the present providence, and the text, I shall inquire,

I. What sort of notice we ought to take of the dispensations of God, and especially in the affairs of nations?

II. I shall consider, What is the guilt and danger of disregarding the hand of God herein?

III. I will apply these things particularly to the present events in our nation.

First, " What sort of notice ought we to take of the dispensations of God?" I answer briefly under three general heads.

1. " We should make a solemn observation of what is awful and afflictive in the events of divine providence, and learn some instructive lessons thereby." *If the* life of *a sparrow* be the object of divine superintendency, *if a sparrow fall not to the ground without our heavenly Father;* Matt. x. 29. much more should we direct our thoughts to the operation and influence of God in the greater incidents of the life and death of man, and the important changes that depend upon them. *When the judgments of God are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness*, or at least they ought to do it; *Isaiah* xxvi. 8, 9. *Is there any evil in the city*, any sorrow attends a nation, *but the Lord hath a hand in it?* Amos iii. 6. *The voice of the Lord hath spoken, and the man of wisdom will see his name, will hear the rod and him that hath appointed it;* Micah vi. 9. The man of religion will inquire, " What have I done to provoke the Almighty to send down his judgments from heaven? What abuse of mercies have I been guilty of, to provoke the great God to remove them from me? What share have I had in the common guilt of a nation, that may have awakened the anger of God against it in any instances of public sorrow?"

2. " We should raise our hearts to a delightful notice and a grateful sense of the mercy of God in his providences." The business of religion is not all sadness and mourning. We are bound to take notice of public joys, as well as of common and extensive calamities. A christian may rejoice in the light of heaven and the sunbeams, as well as observe the clouds, and thunder and storms; but he must remember they all come from above. The wicked of the earth make themselves merry amidst the comforts of life, without any notice of the God that gives them, or any thank-offerings to his name: But a sincere christian loves to receive his blessings from the hand of his heavenly Father: He looks on them as the distributions of divine love, he beholds them sanctified by the covenant of rich grace, and thereby he tastes a double relish of sweetness in them. Common and public blessings afford him a private and delicious sensation beyond what the thoughtless herd of mankind partake of; *The stranger intermeddles not with this joy;* Prov. xiv. 10. When he drinks of the sweet streams of delight here on earth, he traces them to the fountain head in heaven, and as it were bathes himself in the immense ocean of goodness. *This God is my God*, my heavenly friend, *and he will be my God for ever and ever;* Psalm xlviii. 14.

3. " We should make an humble inquiry into the various duties, both toward God and man, which divine providence calls us to, at special seasons, and under special circumstances." It is the language of a soul that walks with God, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Acts ix. 6. There is not a day nor an hour but brings a duty with it; not a change of providence but calls for peculiar practices of piety. We are placed here in a state of service, and God requires that our eye be directed to him hourly, *as the eye of a servant to his master, or a handmaid to her mistress;* so speaks the royal Psalmist;

Psalm cxxiii. 2. We should watch every motion of the right hand of our God, and all the progress of his footsteps in his government of the world, that we may learn our proper business thence; *that in the time of prosperity we may rejoice in the Lord, and in the hour of adversity we may set ourselves to consider our ways, and humble ourselves before him;* Eccles. vii. 14. It is the word of God that appoints us the general rules of duty and religion; but it is providence that leads us to apply these rules, and to put them into daily practice. Thus having inquired what sort of notice a christian ought to take of the hand of God in the events of life, we proceed to shew,

In the second place, "what is the guilt and danger of neglecting this pious practice? And that may be comprized chiefly under the four following heads:

1. Those who take no notice of the operations of God in the affairs of human life, "abuse their reason and their better powers, both as men and as christians." Our eyes and our ears, and other senses of the body, are given us to take notice of the outward objects that surround us, which are the springs of pain or pleasure; and these we enjoy in common with the beasts of the earth: The birds and the fishes, the creeping things, and every little insect, employ their corporeal powers for the same purposes; but man was made with nobler principles, and capacitated to discover and discern the hand of God his Creator, and to observe his supreme direction of all the affairs of mankind: And if we consider ourselves as christians, we profess still a diviner principle of converse with God. How mean, how ignoble and degenerate a thing is it then for men, who profess christianity, to look no further than the objects of sense, and sink themselves to the rank of the brute creation? Man, though he be raised by the station of his nature to a more honourable character than the rest of the animals, yet if he remain without understanding, and thoughtless of his God, *he becomes like the beasts that perish;* Psalm xlix. 20. *Brute beasts which*, as the apostle says, *are made to be destroyed;* 2 Pet. ii. 12. So men that *regard not the operation of the Lord, nor consider the work of his hands, the Lord will destroy them and not build them up;* Psalm xxviii. 5.

2. Those who disregard the work of God in the events of human life, "they deprive the great God himself of that honour which he demands and expects, especially from his more important providences." Do not his sublime wisdom, his extensive goodness and his almighty power, display themselves gloriously in his providential government of mankind? And is it not with this design, that his intelligent creature man should take notice of this display of his glories? To what purpose are all the manifestations of his mercy and of his judgment among men, if the sons of Adam disregard them all? Will not the supreme Governor of the world resent such a stupid and sottish conduct? Does the great God write his own name in every leaf of his two great volumes of nature and providence, and shall his creature man take no notice of it, and refuse to read it? Will he for ever bear with creatures that neglect to take notice of the name and works of their almighty Maker?

3. "They bereave themselves of the rich advantages that may be derived from such converse with God about the events of human life." If we were but wise and curious observers of the conduct of providence, what divine experiments might we obtain of the wisdom and of the grace of God! And lay up a treasure of sweet and solid foundations for encouragement and hope in days to come? The royal Psalmist assures us of blessed advantages to be derived from a skilful notice of divine providences; *Psalm* cvii. 43. *Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness*

of the Lord. They who learn to know his name, by a wise attendance to his works, will put their trust in him; Psalm ix. 10.

If we overlook the hand of the Almighty in the events of human life, we lose much of the spiritual profit of awful and afflictive providences, and much of the sweetness of temporal mercies. Such a sinful neglect will also lead us by degrees to a woful omission of our daily duties, and bring us into great danger of degeneracy and backsliding, into a carnal and worldly frame of spirit: Whereas if we make it our business to watch the hand of God in the occurrences of the world, this is indeed *living by faith, as seeing him that is invisible;* Heb. xi. 27. and we are much better prepared by such a converse with God on earth for a more intimate blessed converse with him in the world of sight and enjoyment.

4. Those who *regard not the works of the Lord,* "*provoke him* to deprive them of all the blessings of life, and to abandon them to *utter ruin.*" How can they ever hope that the Lord will bestow repeated mercies upon them, when they take no notice of his power and his hand in the blessings they have already received? How can they expect to enjoy the continuance of present comforts; *Israel did not know that I gave them corn, and wine, and oil, therefore I will return and take away my corn in the season thereof, and my wine in its season, and will recover my wool which was given to cover their nakedness;* Hosea ii. 8, 9. If this be our practice, we may justly expect to be left of God, and bereaved of the mercies that relate to this life and the life to come. If we like not to retain God in our knowledge, and to glorify him as God, we may justly fear to *be given up to a reprobate mind and to final destruction;* Rom. i. 21, 28. Let such stupid and regardless sinners read the threatenings of the Lord against such brutish people in the words that follow my text. *Therefore my people shall go into captivity, because they have no knowledge; their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst: Therefore hell hath enlarged itself, and opened its mouth without measure, and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth shall descend into it.*— *A just vengeance* on such impiety! I proceed now to

The third general head which I proposed, and that is, to "apply the sense of my text to the particular event of the last week." And I shall divide the circumstances of this great event, *viz.* the death of one king, and the succession of another, together with the notices we should take of it, under the three particulars before mentioned, *viz.* We are called to consider what there is in it of an awful and afflictive kind; what blessed mixtures of mercy attend the afflictive providence, and what are our present duties, both to God and man, which are derived thence.

I. Let us consider what there is in this providence that is awful and afflictive, and what lessons of serious instruction we may draw from it.

1. Here is the death of one of the greatest men upon earth: A king whose dominion was spread from sea to sea, and who reigned over several nations: A prince who held the balance of Europe, and determined the superiority to which side soever he inclined: One that was arbiter of peace and war among the potentates of the world. Yet behold he is subject to mortality and the common stroke of death; Psalm lxxxii. 6, 7. *I have said ye are gods,* because the power of magistrates bears some resemblance to that of the God of heaven: Therefore they are called *the children of the Most High; but they must die like other men. It is the hand of the Lord hath wrought this, in whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind;* Job. xii. 9, 10.

The lesson that we derive from this view of things is, to "take heed lest we depend too much on the life of the best of princes." Though we derive many blessings through their influence, yet we must remember they are not immortal. Let God alone be the solid and everlasting rest and refuge of our souls, whose life is eternity, whose kingdom reigns over all, and his dominion is for ever and ever; *Psalm* cxlvi. 3, 4, 5. *Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help: his breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish*, and all our dependences are vain and frustrate. *Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God, who made heaven and earth, and sea, and keepeth the truth for ever;* verse 6. Isaiah ii. 22. *Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?* God alone is our immortal hope.

2. We may remark in this event, the sudden death of this great man in a journey to his native land. He set out from his palace in Great Britain in a state of health and vigour, with a firm constitution, and strength above the proportion of his years: But ere he arrived at the place which he designed, he was smitten with a mortal faintness, and hurried away from the earth in an unexpected hour: He was arrested in his journey by a fatal messenger from the King of kings, a messenger whose name is Death, and whose commission admits of no delay; a messenger who lays his cold hand on princes, and bears them away resistless through the midst of their guards, to their long home, and the unseen world. Vain was the skill of physicians in that mournful hour; the zeal and fondness of a brother's love was vain. He arrived at the palace of Osnaburg, the habitation of his dearest brother, and only gave him the sad opportunity to see a dying monarch, and take his last long leave of so near and so desirable a relative.

What lesson shall we learn now from the suddenness of this great event but, to "awaken our own souls to a constant readiness for a removal." *Be ye always ready*, says our blessed Lord, *for ye know not when ye shall be called, whether at even or at midnight, or when the cock crows in the morning;* Mark xiii. 35. Whether we shall be summoned away at once from our own homes, or when we are travelling in distant lands. Let us remember we are still borderers on the grave and the eternal world, and we are always within a moment's reach of the invisible state and the region of spirits. It is but the wink of an eye, the cessation of the pulse, the stoppage of our breath, and we are gone beyond the power of medicines, and the art of man to recal us. Who would venture upon a journey without having his soul insured in the hands of Jesus, the Saviour?

There is another reflection that we may derive from this circumstance of the death of our late sovereign, and that is, how often have we ourselves been preserved in journeys, when our gracious monarch died in the midst of his travels? How have we left our habitations in peace, visited our friends in distant parts, and returned to our dwellings in peace again? But this great man was cut off on a sudden, before he reached the place designed? How often have our friends gone forth from the midst of us, and been brought back with safety and joy? Our king went from us and returns no more; here is the sovereignty of Divine Providence; here is the interposing will of the Almighty. Let us remember then to take the will and providence of the great God into our consultations, *when we say, to-day, or to-morrow*, we will go into such a city, and continue there a season and return again; *whereas we know not what shall be on the morrow: What is your life? it is even a vapour that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away; we ought*

therefore to say, if the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that, according to our purpose; *James* iv. 14.

3. Let us remember that this great event carries in it the appearance of a huge affliction to Great Britain, for it is the death of a king whose happy accession was a glorious deliverance of our nation from slavery, and a defence of our religion from popish superstition, tyranny, and blood: We have lost a great and glorious benefactor, under whose government we had enjoyed the blessings of peace and plenty for so many years together. At his accession to the crown he scattered our fears and filled every soul with gladness: He crushed a dangerous rebellion in our land in the beginning of his reign; and by the wisdom of his counsels at home, and the terror of his arms abroad, he maintained peace among the nations. This is he concerning whom we were ready to say, that we shall sit many years under his shadow in our native land, enjoying the comforts of life, and the privileges of the house of God. But he is smitten, his life is vanished, and he is gone from the earth: Our deliverer and our guardian is removed from the midst of us, he will deliver and defend us no more.

The lesson of instruction which we derive hence is this, " The great God doth not stand in need of the greatest of men to carry on his own work. Oh! the divine magnificence of the government of God, who can prepare and qualify instruments for his own service, and employ them for a season for blessed purposes, and lay them aside again at pleasure, without the least interruption to his important designs! If the blessed God had stood in need of a man for the support of his interest in the world, and for the guard of our nation, one would be ready to say, surely our gracious departed sovereign would have been continued in the midst of us, and would have been preserved yet many years on the British throne. *But the Lord seeth not as man sees:* 1 Sam. xvi. 7. *His thoughts are above our thoughts, and his ways are above ours, as the heavens are above the earth;* Isaiah lvii. 7. He hath seen fit to cut short the life of our king, the guardian of our liberties, and the defender of our faith, and yet we trust he intends to save Great Britain, and to preserve his churches in the midst of her: He can do it while king George our deliverer lies asleep in the dust and silence.

4. When we consider the many personal excellencies and royal virtues that adorned the character of our late sovereign, it is an awful and afflictive thing to think of so much excellency removed from the earth. The world is bereaved of one of the best of princes. Should we take a survey of his excellent qualifications for government, it would entertain us beyond the measure of our present time; but in gratitude to the memory of such a prince, and to awaken a due sense of our loss, we cannot pass away to the next head, without the short mention of a few of those royal virtues.

1. He was a prince of a wise heart, and excellent in counsel; sagacious to foresee threatening dangers at a distance, and to penetrate into future events, as far as human foresight is permitted to do it. Consummate wisdom makes an approach to a prophetic spirit. How just and happy were his sentiments of the tendency of things in the former reign! How true his presages! And how dreadful had the final event been, if a merciful providence had not brought him to the throne, to prevent the dangers which he foresaw? With how successful a penetration did he enter into the projects of foreign princes, and by a prudent precaution guard us from the mischievous influence of them? Great Britain and the nations in alliance therewith, find the present happy effects of his wisdom in this respect.

2. He was a prince of great firmness of soul; his heart was all courage; resolution and a steady conduct ran through the whole of his affairs: and in many instances those that were near the throne have observed a remarkable constancy of spirit in his government, the happy effects whereof have been very discernible to those at a greater distance. We have had no weak, fickle management, and changing scenes of things since he wore the crown: This made him the more beloved by his friends, and his enemies stood the more in awe of him.

3. Mercy, goodness, and love were wrought into his very constitution; they discovered themselves even to the eyes of strangers, in the very features of his countenance: Every one that saw his face, declared they saw the evident traces and signatures of benignity and goodness there: And these virtues shone so much the brighter, by how much the higher station they were placed in. Gentleness and love to mankind, and friendly benevolence, are excellent dispositions in any man, but when they are joined with majesty, they imitate the glories of God himself, and carry an illustrious resemblance of our Maker. The death of such a sovereign, who sat on the throne with meekness, and love, and compassion attending on each side of him, is a great and heavy loss to a free-born nation.

4. He was a prince without pride. His whole conduct made it appear that he regarded the good of his subjects more than his own grandeur. He seemed to have no superior airs about him, no supercilious looks; but was affable in his whole deportment towards those who were so much beneath him. He had nothing of that restless and mischievous quality of ambition, that takes every opportunity to grasp at more power, and to seize on the ancient rights and the freedoms of even a loyal and obedient people. The happiness of his subjects seemed to be his constant wish and highest joy.

5. He was a prince who delighted to reward his friends, and would never forget past services: Of this we are witnesses in a special manner who worship God according to our consciences in a way somewhat different from the national establishment: he knew the heartiness of our zeal for the protestant succession, and our activity for his interest according to our limited and narrow powers before he yet arrived at the throne; and the repeal of some hard and severe laws which stood in force against us, and the increase of our liberties, must be ascribed in some measure to this generous principle which reigned in the heart of our deceased sovereign. And it must be said to the immortal honour of king George, that this is no very common character among the princes of the earth.

6. Among his other excellent dispositions it ought never to be forgotten, that he had the common welfare of protestants much at heart, and upon every occasion interposed in their behalf. He could not bear to see his brethren in the profession of the same faith ill treated by popish princes, and unjustly burdened by the persecuting powers of this world. He knew conscience was a sacred thing, and that the empire of it belonged only to God; and as he would not assume a power over it at home, nor impose yokes of bondage on any of his subjects, so neither was he patient to see this antichristian spirit prevail over mankind abroad, wheresoever it was possible for him to procure a redress of such grievances. His own counsels, his wise orders to his ministers, and his royal letters to foreign princes, bear a glorious witness to this part of his character.

It must be told also to the immortal honour of his name and memory, with what zeal he sought the union of protestants among themselves. How readily he employed his good offices to relax the bonds of imposition and severity in some of the reformed cantons of

Switzerland, that conscience might have a larger liberty in the modes of professing the same faith and worship. Surely the man who laboured so gloriously to procure this freedom for christians abroad, must be influenced by higher views than those which are merely political, to maintain and promote a just liberty of conscience among his own subjects.

To conclude, he was a prince who sought to oblige all that he had to do with, and to make them easy and happy; but for those who would not be wrought upon by the condescensions of his love, he knew how to keep them in subjection. The church of God in the world, the protestant kingdoms, and the nation of Great Britain, have sustained a great and certain loss, when such a governor, such a benefactor, such an extensive blessing, is taken from the earth.

II. We proceed now to the second thing remarkable in the late event of providence, and that is to consider "What mercies are mingled with this awful dispensation, that we may raise our souls to a delightful and grateful sense of them."

1. That a prince of so many excellent qualifications reigned so long over us, and that we enjoyed the blessing of his wise and peaceful government for such a number of years. And here it becomes us on this occasion to call to mind the former years of our distress and danger, and the surprising pleasure of our first deliverance. Blessed be the name of our God that he raised up such a successor to the British throne, such a defender of the faith; such a glorious deliverer of the nation from the imminent perils under which we lay, wherein property and religion, liberty and life were all exposed. Blessed be the hand of our God that interposed in so signal a season, and confounded all the devices of our enemies: he blasted their presumptuous hopes at once, and overwhelmed them with a huge and fatal disappointment: *The snare was broken and we escaped:* Psalm cxxiv. 7. The protestant succession obtained, and king George was raised to his appointed throne, and all that is dear to us was rescued from the hands of popish tyranny, which was ready to invade us.

Let us recollect with pleasure the mercy of our God who inspired his predecessor, king William, of glorious memory, to lay the foundation of the protestant succession to the crown of these kingdoms. Then he prepared a healing balm for the wound which we received at the death of our late sovereign, and made a happy provision against a thousand distant dangers. Let us give glory to our God who prolonged the life of our late king, and made him the author of numerous blessings for almost thirteen years together. A large space of the life of man, wherein we enjoyed our civil properties in peace, and our religious privileges were confirmed to us by the constant favour of our prince! Though in the beginning of his reign the enemy made their utmost efforts against us by lifting up axes and hammers against our places of worship, because of our inviolable attachment to his interest, yet his wise and steady conduct soon suppressed those riots, and the law secured us against future fears.

2. It must be acknowledged as an instance of divine mercy, that our king was not taken from the earth by the hands of violence. A bloody death had been a much more formidable appearance. This would have filled our hearts with dismay, lest a secret train of mischiefs should have been contrived and broken out to our great confusion. Blessed be the name of our God that guarded his precious life from day to day, and continued him to a good old age, though he had such a multitude of enemies on earth and in hell.

The agents of Rome are never wanting to contrive the destruction of all those that support what they call the northern heresy, and the powers of darkness are engaged on their side. Yet this great man came to his grave in peace, and died as David did, at a comfortable length of years, full of days, riches and honour.

3. It is to be reckoned among our mercies, since he lived so long as to see the seeds of discord sown among the nations of Europe, and the first efforts of a war in Spain, that he lived also long enough to lay the foundations of an extensive peace. It is worthy our notice that the empress of Muscovy, who was known to be in a contrary interest, died but a few weeks ago, whereby it is supposed some of the foreign potentates were more powerfully and speedily induced to accept the preliminaries of a treaty of peace. Blessed be the God of peace that our sovereign lived to see these preliminaries signed: Had he been taken off from the stage of action but a few weeks sooner, perhaps the peace and the treaty had been greatly retarded, and our enemies might have prosecuted the war with double vigour. Times and seasons, life and death, are in the hands of God, and we have often seen that he hath marked out and limited the extent of the life of princes, to answer wise purposes in his own government of the world, and his gracious designs towards Great Britain and the churches of Christ.

4. It is an instance of divine mercy beyond all expression, that we have such an illustrious prince for a successor: One who is not only a firm protestant by the influence of his education under such a father, but from his own knowledge and choice infinitely prefers the reformed religion, and is a constant professor of it. Blessed art thou, O Britain, for *thy king is the son of nobles*, descended from a race of sovereign princes, trained up from his youngest years to the sublime art of government, Nor do we come under the woe pronounced upon *the land whose king is a child*, a minor under age, that wants a ruler to be set over him. Our present sovereign hath attained to a sufficient number of years, and a large share of experience of human affairs, and has made wise observations of the various occurrences among states and nations, that he may sway the sceptre of our land with greater prudence and success.

It is to be numbered also among our mercies, that king George the Second is no stranger to our nation, having lived many years in the midst of us, and in this he hath a rich advantage beyond his immediate predecessor. Now if our late excellent monarch, who was at first so much a stranger to us, became through the mercy of our God so wise and happy a ruler, how hopeful a prospect may we have of the present and future government under the administration of his royal son and successor, who has studied our laws, has given diligence to understand the customs of the land, and acknowledges the excellency of our constitution. How happy are we in a prince who has professed in his royal declaration, that "our laws, our liberties and religion are most dear to him:" And whose affection to his people is so conspicuous, that he hath gained the hearts of some of his subjects, who could scarce conceal their enmity to his predecessor.

Nor should I be just to my text on this occasion, if I should not take notice of that religious sense which our present sovereign hath expressed many years ago, of the interposing providence of God in counterworking all the mischievous devices of Rome and hell, and bringing the protestant succession in the illustrious house of Brunswick, to take effect in the person of his royal father.* He is not one of those that attribute the revolu-

* See Mr. Derham's dedication of his "Astro-Theology."

tion of kingdoms to chance, but he regards the work of the Lord therein, and the operation of his hands.

5. It should be added to the rank of our mercies also in this event of providence, that the king succeeds to the throne of his father in so much tranquillity and peace. No tumults nor insurrections, no rising sedition, no clashing of arms. The rebellious party are discouraged and broken, their hearts sink within them, and their men of might have not found their hands: We trust their number is greatly diminished, and will decrease continually. George the Second succeeds to the British throne with so generally a satisfaction and applause, that we hope it will soon become universal. May the God of heaven fulfil our hopes!

6. It is a very remarkable part of our joy, that we are also blessed with a queen of an excellent character, and a spirit of uncommon goodness. One who hath been trained up not only to practise religion, but to understand it too. One who hath not wasted her life in the gaieties and softnesses of a court, but hath pursued solid knowledge in the things of nature, and the affairs of morality: One who hath learned the rules of virtue sufficient to teach them as a science, but who teaches them with more honour and success by her own daily practice; and is not diverted by the splendid temptations of a palace from the richer improvements of the mind.

Blessed be God for a British queen who hath shewn such a sincere zeal and love to the protestant religion, as to refuse the imperial crown of Germany, lest she should be entangled or defiled with popish superstition; and who takes a peculiar pleasure to train up her royal offspring in all the paths of virtue and piety. May divine mercy succeed her care! She is a princess whom we hope the providence of God hath raised up to the royal dignity, that she may become a more powerful and extensive pattern of every virtue and every grace, and may help to correct the manners of the nation, and the degenerate customs of the times, by her illustrious example.

7. Among the blessings of this day we must not forget the numerous race of young princes which, we trust, are born to secure and perpetuate our happiness. Children in a more general sense are the blessing of the Lord; but a numerous progeny in a royal house, who shall be all trained up in the protestant faith, are a peculiar favour of heaven to Great Britain. What a happy prospect is it that our late sovereign left such a large posterity behind him! Had his life been single, or like that of king William, not blessed with royal issue, how dreadful would our present case have been? In what dangers and contests had he left the succession to his throne? And our nation might have felt the fatal effects of it, groaning under popish darkness, and wallowing in blood.

Who can review such a multitude of mercies as these are, but must have his heart filled with joy and thankfulness to God, the ruler of the world? And how happily are our deepest sorrows for the death of our late king alleviated by such a view of blessings in a glorious succession? Blessings for present and future ages! I am come now to

The last general head of my discourse, and that is an humble enquiry into the various duties that naturally arise from the present event: Most of them may be summed up under the following particulars:

I. "A proper and becoming sense of our loss." Shall so great a prince be taken away from this earth, and so valuable a blessing from our nation, without an awful and solemn sense of the hand of God? Though he had arrived at the age of sixty-seven years, which is almost the term of the life of man, yet the vigour of his constitution, and his healthy frame of nature, seemed to promise us several more years of protection and peace under

his government: But the all-wise God hath cut off the thread of his valuable life, and disappointed our hopes. And while we stand in awe, and adore the sovereign hand of providence, that he hath deprived us of so excellent a prince, it becomes us to pay all due honours to his memory, even though his throne be supplied with so excellent a successor. All *Israel mourned thirty days for Moses their leader in the plains of Moab, though they had a Joshua to succeed him, who was full of the spirit of wisdom*: Deut. xxxiv. 8, 9.

2. " Such a providence as this should shake us off from our dependence on any creatures," *and fix our hope more entirely on God: He only is the king eternal, immortal, and invisible;* 1 Tim. vi. 13. *He is the King of Kings,* who disposes of their breath, and their sceptre, and their dominions as he pleases; but he reigns for ever and ever, and his kingdom stands to all generations. This duty was hinted before: I add therefore,—As christians, it becomes us on such occasions to remember Jesus, the Son of God, whose title also is the *Lord of Lords, and the King of Kings:* Into his hands are committed all the reigns of government in the upper and the lower worlds. *He hath the keys of death and the grave*; Rev. i. 18. In his hand is the life of princes: they reign but under him, and according to his pleasure. He numbers the days of their life, and the years of their dominion; and he dismisses them from this world when they have finished the work to which he ordained them, and raises up others in their stead, to carry on his own and his Father's wise and eternal scheme of councils. *He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;* Heb. xiii. 8. *and of his kingdom there is no end;* Luke i. 33. Though he be the child that was born of the virgin, the Son that was promised to Abraham, and given in mercy to the world, yet he is also *the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace;* Isaiah ix. 6. Let our eye be directed to him. Let us live upon him as the King of Saints, and the King of Nations. And amidst all the changes and revolutions of this lower world, let us remember that Sion is still safe under the eye and care of Jesus her king.

3. " Let us manifest our gratitude to God for these great and important blessings which are mingled with the present awful event," and let our thankfulness be expressed in such a manner as becomes the professors of piety and strict religion. It is God that has ordained all things so well for us in this nation, who established the protestant succession at first, and hath made it to take effect once and again: It is he hath placed all things in so happy a situation to dry up our tears, and to allay our sorrows. To him be a thousand thanks and honours offered by the nation and all the churches.

And in order to manifest our thankfulness in a more eminent degree, let us enquire wherein we have misimproved the peace, liberty, and other numerous blessings of the former reign, and awaken ourselves to all holy diligence in a wise improvement of our present mercies. Oh! let us not indulge riot, luxury, and vanity, nor waste the blessings of heaven in the follies and iniquities of life. Let us not practise the crimes which my text severely reproves, nor indulge sensual merriment with the neglect of God and religion: But as temporal mercies surround us in a sweet succession, let our love to God, our supreme benefactor, be perpetually increased, and our duties of piety be ever multiplied.

4. That divine providence which has called our present monarch to the throne, " demands all dutiful affection and obedience to be paid him with our hearts and hands." *As we fear God, and love our brethren,* so let *us honour the king,* for these three commands are joined together in the New Testament; 1 *Peter* ii. 17. Reason and scripture

unite them all. Let us submit ourselves to him with all chearfulness, as one whom God has appointed to be the guardian of our religion, and our liberties, and all that is dear to us. Let us ever speak of him with honour, and not mention his name without a becoming respect. With a just impatience let us frown upon all *tale-bearers*, and discourage every *whisperer*, those secret and vile instruments of public mischief. Nor let us give countenance to sly and private insinuations against the dignity and honour of our sovereign. Let us reverence and love him as one that is exalted to be the *minister of God for our good;* Rom. xiii. 4. It is on him, under God, that our eyes are fixed. It is in him that our hopes of happiness centre. Under Christ Jesus who is the Lord of glory, we must look upon George the Second of Great Britain, as the chief guardian and support of the protestant religion in the world.

5. " Let us offer our daily and ardent prayers to God for his long life, prosperity, and peace." Addresses to heaven for the divine presence with him, should be joined with all our vows of allegiance. We read in *Joshua*, chap. i. 17. that when the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh surrendered themselves to the conduct of Joshua in the room of Moses, they joined a hearty petition to the Lord for him: *According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee, and all that thou commandest us we will do: Only the Lord thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses.*

When Solomon was placed on the throne of his father David before he died, David is supposed to write the lxxii. *Psalm*, which may be a proper pattern for our present petitions in this manner: As thou gavest our late king *thy judgments*, O God, so *give thy righteousness to the king's* son: *Let him judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. Let him save the children of the needy, and break in pieces the oppressor: Let him come down like rain upon the new mown grass, as showers that water the earth. In his days let the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace be derived from his posterity so long as the moon endureth; as his dominions are extended from sea to sea, so let him have a spreading influence from the rivers of Great Britain unto the ends of the earth; let those that dwell in distant lands bow before him, and let his enemies lick the dust; let him live and reign a length of years, and all due tribute be given him; let prayer be made for him continually*, and may he be ever engaged in works of blessing to the world, that he may receive daily and perpetual praises.

And as the Spirit of God eminently designed Solomon in this Psalm, as a type of Christ, so let us pray that our sovereign may imitate our blessed Jesus in all divine virtues, and in the sacred qualifications of a ruler: that his throne may be surrounded with wisdom and established in justice: *In his majesty let him ride prosperously with truth, meekness and righteousness attending him;* Psalm xlv. 5. may every princely virtue and grace dwell in his heart and shine through all his actions. May his authority and his royal example join together to work wonders of reformation among the higher and the lower ranks of mankind: And may probity of manners be always a necessary step of access to the king's favour.

Oh! may he be wise as an angel of God, *to discern between good and evil*, between his sincere friends and fawning flatterers! Grant, O Lord, that he may daily increase in sagacity and happy penetration to discover the true interest of the land, and be ever steady and resolute in the pursuit of it. Let him see his own interest inseparably connected with the interest of his people, and pursue them together with glorious success. May the protestant powers abroad acknowledge him as their common father, and their

superior friend; and may even the distant posterity of our nation join with the generations to come in foreign lands in paying honour to his memory, as the chief support of religion and liberty in this lower world.

And since God hath blessed us with a queen consort, let her also have a large share in our best wishes, and our pious addresses to heaven. Long may she live a transcendent blessing to the nation and the world; and fulfil with honour all the promising prospects that her sublime character and virtue in a less exalted station have given us. Let the prophecy of Isaiah be eminently fulfilled in our day, that a *king is become our nursing father, and a queen our nursing mother*: xlix. 23.

The various branches of the royal family demand a share also in our prayers; that plentiful influences from heaven may descend on them all, and that they may be trained up under such parents, for all the high stations to which providence may design them in future times: that blessings derived from the most serene family of Brunswick may be diffused through the nations of the earth; and especially that the heirs of the crown descended from this illustrious house may sit on the throne of Great Britain in a long and perpetual succession, may gloriously maintain religion and virtue in the land, and promote the kingdom of our blessed Redeemer from age to age, till time shall be no more. *Amen.*

EVANGELICAL DISCOURSES

ON

SEVERAL SUBJECTS:

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

AN ESSAY

ON THE

POWERS AND CONTESTS OF FLESH AND SPIRIT.

DEDICATION.

TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST ASSEMBLING IN BERRY-STREET, LONDON.

DEAR CHRISTIAN FRIENDS, BELOVED IN OUR LORD,

HAVING dedicated to you my first volume of sermons, printed twenty-six years ago, I thought it proper to address this to you, being the last I am ever likely to publish, that I might testify to the world the continuance of my sincere affection for you; and signify to you my ardent desire to do what I can, in my present weak state of health, to promote the welfare of your souls.

The "Essay on the Powers and Contests of Flesh and Spirit," which is added at the end of these Discourses, has been written many years ago, and I hope it may be made useful, through the blessing of God, to lead private christians to form a right judgment in many things relating to their spiritual concerns.

As I trust all these papers contain the truths of God, which I have thus recommended to you, so I am persuaded you will find them to be exactly conformable to the New Testament, in all your reviews and studies of that blessed book. It is there my hopes of eternal life are fixed; and in this hope, I trust all of you will be found walking stedfastly in the same faith, by the same rule, till you are at length made happy partakers of the same salvation.

The great harmony which has subsisted betwixt me and my dear and worthy brother and colleague, the Reverend Mr. Samuel Price, for more than forty-three years, without any interruption, has been very comfortable to us, and a considerable blessing to you. May the Spirit of God render his continued labours amongst you, in the gospel, very serviceable, for your further establishment and growth in grace! With this design, I commit these Discourses to the providence of Christ, and commit him and you also into his hands, to whom I doubt not, you have often surrendered yourselves.

And let me intreat you, as a church of Christ, not only to suffer, but to regard the word of exhortation, which, as your aged pastor, whose voice you may probably hear no more, I would now, in a solemn manner leave with you, *viz.*

Continue to be of one mind, live in peace, be careful to practise all the duties of holiness and righteousness, keep close to God by humble fervent prayer and dependance, seek his face for direction, and a blessing in all your affairs.

To the God of almighty power, and infinite wisdom and grace, I commend you, who is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified.

Finally, my beloved friends, farewel. May the love of God, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be ever with you. *Amen.*

I am, with much respect, under very declining circumstances of life,

Your affectionate friend,
and faithful servant in the gospel,
ISAAC WATTS.

Stoke-Newington,
Jan. 13, 1746-7.

EVANGELICAL DISCOURSES

ON SEVERAL SUBJECTS, &c.

DISCOURSE I.

THE DIVINE COMMISSION OF ST. PAUL EXAMINED AND ESTABLISHED.

A Sermon preached on Easter-day, 1731, in opposition to all the Deists who have appeared in the world since Christianity began: being a full confirmation of the blessed gospel.

ACTS XXV. 18, 19.

AGAINST WHOM WHEN THE ACCUSERS STOOD UP, THEY BROUGHT NONE ACCUSATION OF SUCH THINGS AS I SUPPOSED, BUT HAD CERTAIN QUESTIONS AGAINST HIM OF THEIR OWN SUPERSTITION, AND OF ONE JESUS WHO WAS DEAD, WHOM PAUL AFFIRMED TO BE ALIVE.

THE FIRST PART.

THE history which introduces these verses may be represented in short in this manner:

The Jews were highly enraged against St. Paul for preaching the gospel of Christ with such freedom and boldness in several places; and when they found him at Jerusalem, they took occasion to seize him, and bring him before the magistrate, with heavy accusations; but when he had defended himself so well, the magistrates saw no cause to punish him. The Jews lay in wait to assassinate him, or murder him privately; which being known, he was sent by night to Cesarea, to be judged by Felix the governor; and there he lay in prison two years, till a new governor, Festus, came into the province.

The Jews still pursued their malice against Paul, and what they could not obtain of Felix, they hoped to persuade Festus to grant them: And when Festus had heard what charges the Jews brought against him, and when Paul appealed unto Cæsar, fearing that Festus would comply with the unjust desire of the Jews, Festus had a mind to hear the whole cause, that he might send Cæsar a more particular account. Now king Agrippa being there upon a visit, Festus tells Agrippa the story in this speech, of which my text is a part, *ver.* 17, &c.

And from these words we may take occasion to make these three observations.

I. Civil governors among the heathens, before they were taught to persecute the christians, thought it strange to have matters of pure religion brought before them, where the state and the peace of it was not concerned.

II. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the grand question in our debates about christianity, and which we are solicitous to maintain, in vindication of our religion.

III. Paul would not have affirmed Jesus Christ, a dead man, to be alive, without

very good proof of it; knowing that the whole religion which he taught the world depended on the truth of it.

First observation. Civil governors among the heathens, usually in ancient times, thought it strange to have matters of pure religion brought before them.

Festus imagined some dreadful accusation of sedition or murder was brought against Paul, or some high crime against the state, when he was with such fury brought before him; but there was nothing of this kind appeared. St. Paul expressly says, he had walked uprightly before God and man, and exercised himself to keep a good conscience toward God and men; a conscience void of offence; and after many years, he came to bring alms to his own nation, to do his country a kindness, and the Jews seized him, upon pretence of his opinions being contrary to the religion of their nation.

The great design of civil government, and the institution of magistracy among men, is to keep the peace, to secure the persons and properties of mankind who were innocent, from all manner of injury; and there is nothing more of religion comes within their province, than is absolutely necessary to secure the public peace. Now upon this account, and that with some appearance of reason, it hath been supposed that atheists, or those who deny God, or his providence, or his government of the world, may be justly punished by magistrates, so far at least as to be banished from their dominions: because they who deny the knowledge and justice of a God, a superior Governor, can give no security by oaths, of their allegiance or loyalty to any government whatsoever; and will break all manner of bonds when they can do it safely. But where some divine power is owned and acknowledged, who knows and will punish perjury and falsehood, the civil governor hath no farther power in affairs of pure religion, where the peace of mankind, the property of man, and the safety of the state are not concerned: Now these privileges and powers are not impaired by any article of the religion of nature.

This was the notion of the wiser and better heathens by the light of nature, and therefore you do not find them usually quarrelling about their gods, and bringing one another before courts of justice, because of their contentions and differences in matters of their religion: Nor would the magistrates bear it. This appears in the case of St. Paul, at Corinth; Acts xviii. 12—16. *And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment-seat, saying, this fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law. And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, if it were a matter of wrong, or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you; but if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters: and he drove them from the judgment-seat.*

But then Gallio was much to blame in the 17th verse, where he took no cognizance of the Greeks beating Sothenes, an innocent man, being the ruler of the synagogue; which was a crime against the peace of the city, and an offence against the government, which Gallio ought to have resented.

But however the civil magistrates among the heathens had nothing to do in matters of pure religion, yet the Jews were continually running to the civil magistrate with their charges against those who opposed their religion, or any part of it. And this is the plain and apparent reason of it: The government of the Jews was a theocracy; God was their King as well as their God; the law that he gave them *by the hand of Moses* was the law of their secular affairs as well as the rule of their religion: and there-

fore the high priest was made a judge in many civil affairs as well as religious. Their religion and their civil government were so interwoven by God's being their King as well as their God, that there were many crimes in religion to be punished by the civil magistrate, by the appointment of God himself; which makes the case of the Jews different from the case of all other nations under heaven: For no people ever had God for their civil and political governor and lawgiver, but the Jews alone.

Christianity does not claim, or assume, or pretend, to any such privilege or power: It does not alter this matter from what the light of nature hath determined: It introduces no new civil government; but leaves all these matters as it finds them; and since the Judaic state and government are abolished, there is no magistrate on earth hath power to enquire or command, to rule or punish, any further in matters of religion, than to see that the state suffer no damage, and the peace of mankind and the government be secured.

But this hath been the unhappiness of christians almost in all ages since christianity began, they have been cited before magistrates, and punished even by their fellow-christians, as well as by the Jews and heathens, for those notions and practices wherein the magistrate hath no power. This the Jews began you see very early, and the Roman governors and heathens have carried it on; and christian magistrates have carried this matter to the height, but it is in the antichristian church. They have done this by bloody persecutions, racks, torments, and murders of the best of their fellow-christians, where the very light of nature dictated to the best and wisest of heathens, that they had no power or authority; and it is a plain confession of it where Festus and Gallio were not willing to meddle; nor would Pilate himself, who crucified Christ, have done it if the Jews had not almost constrained him; as sufficiently appears in the history of the death of Christ. Let us remember then that the religion of Christ is not built on the wisdom or power of man, nor doth it need such a support. All that christianity wants, is to have the persons and property, and peace of its professors, secured against the outrages of wicked men. Its own truth and excellency, and divine authority, will make its own way into the world by the assistances of the blessed Spirit, where human powers do but let it alone, and preserve it from the unrighteous violence of its neighbours.

Second observation. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the chief article, and the grand point, which private christians and ministers are solicitous to maintain in the vindication of their religion. This was the point that stood forth to view, and shewed itself with such evidence in the debate between St. Paul and his accusers, when Festus gave them a hearing, that he makes a special remark on that, as though it were the most conspicuous and remarkable article of their contention. Peter and Paul were the two chief preachers among the christians who are recorded in scripture, and you find them continually insisting on the resurrection of Christ. It was chiefly the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead that was the matter of Paul's supposed heresy and crime, as Festus understood the matter. This was the great point of contest.

Reason I. Because this article of the resurrection of Christ is a most effectual proof of his divine commission. This point, whether Jesus Christ, *who was dead, is now alive* or no, is a question of such importance, that the christian religion stands or falls with it. It is certain Jesus Christ was once dead; this the Jews allow, this Festus takes for granted: Jesus was certainly crucified, a spear run into side, his heart's blood was let out, he was buried, and Pilate the governor and the priests sealed up the sepulchre, to guard it against all possible fraud of stealing away the body. Now if he be not risen

again, his religion is not true, his pretences are vain; he was not sent from heaven, nor is he a prophet or messenger of God. St. Paul grants, if *Jesus be not risen, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins, and we who preach a risen Jesus, are false witnesses;* 1 Cor. xv. 14, 15. But on the other hand, if Jesus be alive, then his religion is divine. Let me just mention these two reasons for what I say.

1. It is an undeniable proof of his divine commission, because the prophets foretold this resurrection concerning the Messiah, though in more obscure language and darker expressions. Now if he had not risen from the dead, then Jesus had not been the Messiah whom the prophets foretold. See *Acts* xxvi. 6, 8. for thus St. Paul pleads: *And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers;— Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?* 1 Cor. xv. 4. Paul owns that he was dead, and *that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.* Acts xiii. 32, &c. *The promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus from the dead.* Isaiah lii. 9—12. *He poured out his soul unto death. He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days.* Psalm xvi. 10, 11. *Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor suffer thine holy one to see corruption: Thou wilt shew me the path of life.*

But on the other hand, if he did rise from the dead, this is a thing which a mere man could not do by his own power, nor would the holy and all-wise, and true and faithful God, suffer any evil powers to do it for the vindication of an impostor: and therefore he must be the true Messiah.

2. It is also a most effectual proof of his commission from God, because Jesus Christ foretold this concerning himself; *John* ii. 18, 19, 21, 22, *viz. that he should rise from the dead:* Matt. xvi. 21. The miracles which Christ performed were very great, and sufficient to prove his divine authority: But since he gave forth such a prophecy concerning himself, if this prophecy had never been fulfilled, it would have weakened the force of his miracles, and given us reason to suspect what power they came from. This his rising from the dead was the great and crowning miracle that gave confirmation to all the rest.

Now considering this resurrection from the dead to be foretold by the prophets, and by himself in his life-time, this was as great a testimony as could be given of God's approving him as a prophet sent from heaven: For it is the peculiar property and work of God to raise the dead. See *Rom.* iv. 17. This is God's eminent prerogative. Surely he must be no common favourite of heaven, on whom the great and almighty God bestows such a privilege; Acts iii. 13, 15. *Ye have killed the Prince of Life, whom God hath raised up from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.*

Reason II. Because as his rising from the dead is the great proof of his mission, so the resurrection of Christ is the great foundation of the christian's hope, which will appear in several particulars, *viz.*

1. This was a testimony of his having answered the end for which he died, having made full atonement for sin, and his being released from the hands of punishing justice, *Acts* ii. 24. *Rom.* iv. 25. *Rom.* viii. 34. He took our sins on him, he did bear the punishment of our iniquities; 1 Pet. ii. 24. *he bare our sins in his own body on the tree,* &c. And death is the wages of sin. Now when he had taken our sins on him, unless he had made full atonement and expiation for sin, he would have lain under the power of death still: but being raised from the dead, it appears that divine justice hath received full satisfaction for sin: and the way is open for the justice of God to receive sinners into favour.

2. This is the beginning of his exaltation and his power, to bestow all the blessings of

the gospel, sanctification, salvation, and eternal life; as well as all the gifts of the Spirit which confirmed his religion. See Acts ii. 32, 33, 36. *This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses: therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear; therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus—both Lord and Christ;* Acts v. 31. *Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.*—His government, his intercession, his coming to judgment, all depend on this; and his power to bestow heaven on his disciples, as well as his power to punish the wilful, and obstinate, and impenitent, who renounced or rejected his name, his gospel, and his salvation.

3. This Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, is the prime foundation of our most glorious expectations; it is the pattern and pledge of our final hope and blessedness: *because I live ye shall live also,* saith our blessed Lord; John xiv. 19. xii. 26. *Where I am, there shall also my servant be;* 1 Cor. xv. 20, 49. *Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept: As we have borne the image of the earthly, so shall we also bear the image of the heavenly;* 2 Cor. iv. 14. *Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.* See more; John xiv. 2, 3. *I go to prepare a place for you,—that where I am there ye may be also.* Eph. ii. 5, 6. *Even when we were dead in sins, God hath quickened us together with Christ, —and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*

Occasional Reflection. If you are furnished with convincing arguments that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead, then you may be assured your religion is true; though there may be twenty little cavils that you cannot easily answer: You may be assured also that all the blessings of this religion are provided and ready for his faithful followers.

Is it certain that Jesus is risen from the dead? Then my sins are fully atoned for and forgiven, if I trust in him, and give myself up to him; Rom. viii. 33, 34. *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us;* i. e. as appears from the foregoing verses, for all those who believe or trust in Christ.

Then he hath all power to sanctify and save me, if I commit myself into his hands: Eph. i. 17, 18, 19. and ii. 1, 5, 8. *You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins. We are quickened together with Christ,* and saved by his grace; *i. e.* We who have trusted in Christ; *Eph.* i. 12.—Then I shall be raised from the dead, as sure as if it were done already; for he is the pledge and pattern of the resurrection of all his followers; Rom. viii. 11. *If the Spirit of him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you; he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*—O happy souls! who have given up themselves sincerely to this all-sufficient Saviour, and can apply these consolations to themselves, which are written in 1 *Cor.* xv. in many glorious and comfortable expressions.

Third Observation. Paul would not have affirmed Jesus Christ, who was dead, to be alive again, without very good proof of it.--Here these two things are to be considered, or enquired:

1. Why Paul would not have affirmed it without just grounds.

2. What particular reasons Paul had to believe it; or what good proof he had of it.

Enquiry the first. Why Paul would not have affirmed it without just grounds: These are some of the considerations to make this evident, *viz.*

1. He was a man of good natural parts, of great sagacity as well as good learning, and he could not so easily have been imposed upon in a thing of that importance, which was done in his own country, and the chief city of it, in his own day and time, and when he had abundant opportunities to have searched into the truth or falsehood thereof, and his whole nation was set upon the search and severest scrutiny into it. Now that he was a man of parts and knowledge, the good sense and reasoning which appears in his writings sufficiently testify this character. He was a young man when he was converted, and he was brought up in Jerusalem, at the feet of Gamaliel: He must have great opportunities of enquiring concerning the history of the life, doctrine, and death of Christ, and of the report of his resurrection, among his own countrymen.

2. He seems to be a very sincere, faithful and honest man: This his whole conduct shews, if we consider: He appears to have an honest zeal for his religion whilst he was a pharisee, as well as afterward; diligently and openly pursuing what he professed: No flaw was found in his morals: No charge of hypocrisy; Acts xxiii. 1. *I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.* Nor are his morals impeached by his worst adversaries.

3. He was once a fierce and violent enemy to Jesus Christ, and his name, and his gospel, and his followers; Gal. i. 13. *I persecuted the church of God and wasted it;* Acts xxvi. 11. *And being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities;* 1 Tim. i. 13. *Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious.* This was sufficiently witnessed by his own countrymen the Jews. It hath been sometimes said by unbelievers, that testimonies of the resurrection of Christ came only from his friends, and that you have none of the heathens, or professed Jews, bear witness to it. Here is a professed Jew, and a violent enemy to christianity, who bears strong and constant witness to it. But it could never be supposed that he should continue an enemy and an unbeliever of christianity, after he believed that Christ was risen from the dead, and thereby so evidently proved that he was the true Messiah.

4. He spent his whole life afterwards with much zeal and fatigue, in publishing this truth, that Jesus Christ was risen from the dead, and the doctrines which depend on it. He preached this gospel to a multitude of towns and cities among the heathens, who were utter unbelievers, besides his vindicating this doctrine always among the unbelieving Jews.

5. He exposed himself to perpetual dangers and difficulties, and to many persecutions, by affirming it, and even to death itself; and that without any hope of riches, honours, or pleasures in this world; Acts xx. 23, 24. *The Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.*

Now put all these things together, and can it be supposed that any man, a wise, an ingenious and learned man, faithful and sincere, an enemy to christianity, and of the name of Christ, should be so effectually convinced of the truth of the doctrine of Christ, and of the facts which support it, as to spend his life in preaching this gospel, and to die for it, if he had not abundant ground to believe it. And if Paul believed it with such evidence, we may venture to believe it too.

DISCOURSE II.

THE DIVINE COMMISSION OF ST. PAUL EXAMINED AND ESTABLISHED.

ACTS XXV. 18, 19.

OF ONE JESUS, WHO WAS DEAD, WHOM PAUL AFFIRMED TO BE ALIVE.

THE SECOND PART.

SECONDLY: The next thing to be enquired is, what special and particular reasons Paul had to believe the resurrection of Christ, and thus constantly to preach it. Here I shall not run through all the various proofs of the resurrection of Christ, which are often summed up together on this occasion; but only mention those which convinced St. Paul, and gave him this full assurance, that Jesus was risen from the dead.

1. He saw Jesus Christ after his resurrection, and spake with him more than once; Acts ix. 4, 5. *And a voice said unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest.* And xxii. 17. *While I prayed in the temple I saw him, saying unto me, make haste,* &c. 1 Cor. xv. 4—8. *He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve; after that, of above five hundred brethren at once; after that he was seen of James; then of all the apostles; and, last of all, he was seen of me also.* He appeals to this sight of Christ, for the truth of the resurrection of Christ. It belongs to the character of an apostle, that he must be one who had seen the Lord; therefore he partly proves his apostleship that way; 1 Cor. ix. 1. *Am not I an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord.* The first time he saw Christ, after his resurrection, was on the road to Damascus, when there were several with him accompanying him on the road, who were also surprized with the descending glory, though they were not permitted to hear the words. He saw him again; *Acts* xxii. 17, 18, 21. when Christ sent him to preach to the gentiles.

2. He felt a wonderful change in himself, both in his body and soul, after he had the first vision of Christ: He was struck blind, and after three days had his sight restored, by the laying on of the hands of Ananias, a christian, according to the vision which was given him; *Acts* ix. 8, 18. He had a new scene of things set before his understanding, even the whole scheme of christianity. Some suppose that, in the three days of his blindness, he was taught the gospel. And accordingly it is said, Acts ix. 20, 22. *That he straightway preached Christ in the synagogue, that he is the Son of God;* Gal. i. 1. *Paul an apostle, not of man, nor by man, but by Jesus Christ.* He had a new heart given him, and was made a new man. *I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. God called me by his grace, and revealed his Son in me;* Gal. i. 15, 16. And of an enemy he became a friend, and preacher of the gospel; *Gal.* i. 11—16, 23.

3. He found strange powers communicated to him, and he could speak many unknown

languages, and gave this gift of tongues to other men; he could heal the sick with a touch of his hand, or a word of his mouth; he could make the lame to walk, as at Lystra; *Acts* xiv. 8, 10. and strike men blind with a reproof, so Elymas, *Acts* xiii. 11, 12. and could raise the dead; so Eutychus, *Acts* xx. 10, 12. and besides all this, he had a power of communicating these miraculous and healing gifts to christians; which eminently appears among the Corinthians; to which he appeals in his disputes with them; 1 *Cor.* xiv. 18.

Now was it possible for a man who felt such amazing changes wrought in him, and such amazing powers communicated to him by Jesus Christ, to doubt whether Christ was risen from the dead, whether Jesus were alive or no? Or would God have communicated such powers to a man, who went about to preach the resurrection of Christ, if Christ had never been raised from the grave? Would God have afforded such favours to a man who preached the christian religion, if it had not been true and approved of God!

Nor could St. Paul be deceived in his frequently exercising these powers, nor could he deceive others by pretending to them, nor could he appeal to men who enjoyed them, if he had not received them and bestowed them. He appeals, in his public epistles to the Corinthians and Romans, two large assemblies in two noted cities; *Rom.* xv. 18. 2 *Cor.* xii. 11. These letters were to be read by the churches, and they published his vindication. And let it be observed too, that several among the Corinthians were his professed adversaries, and had set themselves up against him, and endeavoured to deny his apostleship. 1 *Cor.* ix. 1, 2. *If I be not an apostle to others I am unto you; for ye are the seal, or proof, of my apostleship,* by receiving divine gifts from me.

4. Upon closer examination of the Bible, St. Paul found, that Christ's rising from the dead was agreeable to the revelations that God had made to mankind in former ages, agreeable to the prophecies of the prophets his predecessors, and particularly agreeable to the explications of those scriptures by his forefathers, and the promises contained in his own native religion, and in the books which teach it; *Acts* xiii. 30—37. and eminently in that great type and figure of him, Jonah the prophet, who lived again after he had lain three days and nights in the belly of the whale, in the heart of the sea; *Matt.* xii. 39, 46. Which was fulfilled in the resurrection of Christ.

5. By conferring with others of his own nation, and his own religion, who were well acquainted with Jesus Christ in his lifetime, he found the same truth confirmed by them; for they had seen Jesus Christ, and eat and drank with him after he rose from the dead: So Peter and James, as *Gal.* i. 18, 19. And they confirmed the same doctrine by their testimony to him, and by gifts and miracles, as well as by their own personal knowledge.

6. He saw the blessed and amazing effects of the resurrection of Christ among the Gentiles, who were once grossly ignorant idolaters, devoted to gross superstitions, slaves to every lust, and given up to all abominations; as they are described *Rom.* i. 18, &c. *Gal.* iv. 8. *Eph.* iv. 17. 1 *Cor.* vi. 11. But they were changed by this gospel, and made *new creatures.*

Before I proceed any further, I would make two or three Remarks.

Remark 1. Which of all the infidels of the Jewish or heathen nations, which of all the unbelievers and apostates in a christian land, ever could pretend to bring such powerful and convincing arguments against the resurrection of Christ, as St. Paul had for it?

Who hath ever attempted or presumed to prove that Jesus Christ continues still among the dead, by such effectual arguments as Paul had to prove that he is alive? St. Paul's own reason exercising itself on these arguments, could not resist the power of them, but he became a captive to the force of this reasoning, and a rational believer, and a zealous preacher of a risen Jesus.

2. How necessary it is for christians, whose life and hopes depend on the New Testament, to be well satisfied that St. Paul was in the right, and that St. Paul's doctrine is true. For it is evident, that a great part of our religion, at least in the clearness, and fulness, and glory of it, is derived from his writings. His writings make up near half the New Testament.

Many of the articles of our religion would be less plain, and more doubtful, if we did not borrow light from Paul's writings. Many a comfortable expression which our souls rest upon would be lost and useless to us, if we are not satisfied of the truth of what St. Paul tells us, as one commissioned by our risen Saviour. Many a sweet and powerful promise, on which christians have lived and died, would lose its sweetness and its force, if we doubt of the truth and authority of the epistles of St. Paul. What would some of you have done without several chapters, and many verses in them? as *Rom.* iv. and v. 8, 12, 14. I mean particularly with regard to the doctrine of original sin, derived from Adam, and the salvation by Christ, his priesthood, his royalty, and the use and benefit of afflictions; *Heb.* xi. xii. &c. Our resurrection from the dead, and our eternal happiness; 1 *Cor.* xv. and 1 *Thess.* iv. and many others?

And of how great advantage is it to us, that St. Paul has foretold, in plain language, the rise and characters of antichrist; 2 *Thess.* ii. 3—12. and the destruction of that state, to forewarn us, and to give us comfortable hopes and expectations. It is matter therefore of great and heavenly importance, for us christians to be well established in the belief of St. Paul's conversion, his faith, and his apostleship, and for this end we shall do well to remember these proofs and arguments which convinced him that Jesus was risen from the dead. Other holy writers have told us more of the life, actions, death, and resurrection of Christ, in the particular circumstances thereof; but St. Paul has told us more of the blessed consequences of these transactions. And let it be always kept in mind by us, that he was in a special manner the apostle to the gentile nations, of which Great Britain is a large province, and a remarkable part; so that, in his writings he speaks directly to us, and we are bound to attend to him.

3. It is very reasonable to conclude, we may safely believe what St. Paul believed and taught about this subject of the resurrection of Christ. For if we have but reason to believe that this was Paul's character, faith, and practice, and these are the reasons of his belief, what should discourage or stagger us?—Let us sum up the force of this argument and put it together.

Here is a wise, learned, sincere, honest man, bred up a pharisee in a strong opposition to Christ, and the doctrine of his resurrection, zealous for another religion, even the religion of his fathers and his country, who yet saw reason to renounce all his ancient prejudices, and submit to receive this new and strange doctrine, who believed and professed this gospel, which he once grievously persecuted, and afterwards preached it, with much fatigue, danger and suffering, supported it with courage, and constant divine zeal and piety, and the practice of every virtue; through his whole life, gloried in his perpetual sufferings for it, lived upon the comforts derived from it, died in defence of it,

and sealed it with his blood, and left it as a chief treasure to those whom he loved best in this world, even to the churches of Christ.

Now we have not this account of Paul from mere hearsay and tradition, but we have his own testimony to all this in his writings, which have been delivered down to us through many ages: and no man of sense can reasonably doubt whether they are his writings or no, any more than we can doubt the writings of Julius Cæsar, or Seneca, Livy, or Virgil. I add this further: Concerning the vigour and spirit of his writings, and the force of argument contained in them, we have the testimony of some of his greatest adversaries, as he himself represents the case. His letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; and he was not ashamed to appeal to themselves, and threaten them, that he would make it appear that his practice towards them should have as much force and power as his letters had, when he came the second time to visit them; 2 *Cor.* x. 10, 11. And we have the testimony of two others, particularly Luke the physician, in his history of the Acts of the Apostles, who was a fellow-traveller with him; and Peter, who was another of his countrymen, in his epistles, bears witness to him and to his writings: Besides the testimony of all the christian writers from the beginning of christianity; 2 *Pet.* iii. 15, 16. Which writings of St. Paul are dignified by St. Peter himself, with the name of the scriptures, *ver.* 16. they being both men inspired by God, and of chief repute among the apostles.

I proceed now to enquire, what were these blessed effects on men in the heathen world, whereby Paul's doctrine of the resurrection of Christ was further confirmed and established.

And here I might talk largely of the idolaters, that were turned from their superstitions to the worship and love of the true God, of their abandoning their former vices, and the superstitious and sinful customs of their nations, and the reformation of their lives and manners, to goodness and holiness, &c. but I shall confine myself only to those effects which bear a more apparent relation to the resurrection of Christ; and such are these that follow: *(viz.)*

1. How many dead sinners were made alive to God, and virtue, piety, and universal holiness, by preaching this doctrine of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ? What encouragement for hope of pardon for the worst of sinners, in this blessed doctrine of a dying and a rising Saviour? What an assurance of full atonement made to the justice of God, in that Jesus, who, in death, took our sins upon him, is now discharged from the dead, and his dismission from the grave is a full token and proof of it. *He* died *for our offences, and rose again for our justification;* Rom. iv. 25.

If Christ be yet under the pain of death, as the apostle argues, 1 *Cor.* xv. 17. and be not risen, *then our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins:* But if he be risen, then our faith and hope are confirmed, and our sins are atoned for, and our souls are pardoned, if we trust in him.

Oh! how many guilty consciences are made easy, and that upon solid grounds, by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead? He is *a God of peace,* and *reconciled* to sinners, *who brought Jesus Christ from the dead,* by virtue of the *blood of the everlasting covenant;* Heb. xiii. 20. Rom. viii. 34.

Several of the dead saints arose after his resurrection, and that by the virtue of it, *Matt.* xxvii. 53. as an emblem of the many dead souls that should rise from a death in sins and trespasses by the same influence. *Eph.* ii. 5. 6. A risen Saviour hath, accord-

ing to the apostle's preaching, given them *repentance and remission of sins.* Luke xxiv. 46, 47. *They are raised from a death in sins, by virtue of the resurrection of Christ.*

2. How many earthly, carnal, and sensual souls, have been made heavenly-minded by faith in a risen Saviour. Many there are who have felt the power of the word. *Col.* iii. 1. *If ye are risen with Christ, set your affections on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right-hand of God.*

A risen Jesus calls the soul upward and heaven-ward. What have we here on earth worth living for, since Jesus is risen from the dead, hath left the world, and gone to heaven? *Jesus,* our *hope,* our *life,* our *eternal joy;* Col. i. 27. This gospel of a risen Saviour hath done more to refine the heart from earth, and flesh, and sensuality, and the love of this world, and turn it to God, and things heavenly, than all the reasonings of philosophers through all ages, and in all nations. Compare the cities where they disputed with the churches which Paul planted, and then judge.

3. How many captives of Satan have been released by the power of Jesus, since his release from the grave? The devil had no power to hold Christ in the fetters of death; *Acts* xii. 37, 38. and hath been forced to release thousands of his slaves by the authority of a risen Jesus. Col. ii. 15. *And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.* Psalm lxviii. 18. *Thou hast received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them.* And *Eph.* iv. 8, 9, 13, 15. *He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men,* whereby they were made prophets, teachers, ministers, &c.

4. How many fearful and feeble creatures have grown bold and victorious in sufferings, and have conquered death itself, by faith in a dying and rising Saviour? *Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ;* 1 Cor. xv. 57. How many believers have laid down their bodies in the dust with sweet satisfaction and joy, through faith in the resurrection of Christ, and have triumphed over the grave? *O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory?* 1 Cor. xv. 55. St. Paul had seen abundance of this work performed, through the nations where he planted the christian churches, and these wonders of salvation wrought among the gentiles, by his preaching of Jesus, and his resurrection; and every one of these wonders confirmed his belief, that Jesus, *who was dead, is now alive.*

A general Remark on this head.—It greatly confirms our holy religion, when we hear of these blessed effects of the resurrection of Christ in other persons; but our own personal hope must be established by feeling these effects in ourselves.

Enquire into your own state under these four particulars last mentioned. Search into your own souls, what have every one of you felt of these blessed and divine effects; and let not this discourse only confirm your faith, but let it awaken and raise your hearts to a share of holy and perpetual joy.

Some general meditations, drawn from the text and discourse.—1. However it hath been, and however it is, a shameful matter of doubt and enquiry among infidels in a christian land, in our world, whether Jesus, who was put to death, be alive or no, yet it is no matter of doubt or enquiry in the world above, or the world beneath, in heaven or in hell. There his dominion and power are well known: Nor will it be any matter of doubt hereafter in our world, when he that was dead shall come in his Father's name, vested with power, and enthroned in glory, to judge the unbelieving nations, and all the sons of infidelity. He was once unknown in this world, living and dying, but will not

be so for ever; 1 John iii. 1. The great enquiry between Paul and his adversaries was about this strange person; it was of one Jesus, who is spoken of as an unknown man. And he was so for a time, but it will not be so for ever. *The world* once *knew him not;* John i. 10, but he shall be most remarkably and illustriously manifested one day.

2. How little mention soever was made of the death and resurrection of Christ, and especially of the doctrines derived thence, in his own preaching in public while he lived; yet these are evidently and continually insisted on in the preaching of his apostles, as things of the greatest moment in christianity. Let not these things therefore be strange or unheard-of in our ministration of this gospel, since it is built upon them.

It was not proper that Christ should too freely publish these things to the world, when they had not been actually transacted among men; nor was it so fit that he should speak so particularly of the consequences and effects of them, when they were not actual facts; yet he gave sufficient notice to the world, and much more to his disciples by way of prophecy, that they might expect them. And as he did not talk of these events freely and publicly, so he could not so properly talk of the consequent blessings of them. This was left to be done by his apostles, after those events were come to pass. *I have yet many things to say unto you,* (says our blessed Lord) *but ye cannot bear them now;* John xvi. 12.

3. Let us remember, that whatsoever advantages or blessings we can derive from the death of Christ, they all depend on his resurrection. His being dead will be of no avail to our souls, either for *pardon,* or *sanctification,* or future happiness, unless he be risen again; 1 *Cor.* xv. 14, 17. *And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain—ye are yet in your sins.* Rom. iv. 25. *Jesus who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.* When we meditate on a dying Saviour in any of his ordinances, let us remember, the Lord is risen; he hath fulfilled that dreadful atonement for sin in his death; he is accepted of his Father; and he has thereby manifested, that there is a way opened for the pardon of sin, and our salvation. He hath conquered death and the devil; he hath laid a foundation for our rising from the grave; he will fulfil in heaven what he hath begun on earth; his throne shall consummate the work of his cross. *If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life;* Rom. v. 10.

4. If Jesus being dead, and alive again, is so momentous a point, so important an article in our religion, then we may remark, that some of the chief evidences of the truth of our religion, are nearly connected with some of the chief glories, benefits, and excellencies of it; for they are all built on this same foundation, even the resurrection of our blessed Lord. These are not merely strange pieces of history, but such doctrines are built on them, which are the life of our souls.

The resurrection of Christ confirms our religion: *First,* As it gives sufficient proof that God, whose prerogative it is to raise from the dead, approves what Jesus taught: And *Secondly,* As Jesus Christ himself foretold his own resurrection; as I said before. And it lays a foundation for some of the chief doctrines, blessings, and duties of our religion which St. Paul preaches without end; *viz.* our trust in this risen Saviour, our faith in his intercession in heaven, and coming to God by him: our dependance on his government; our resignation of ourselves to him; our expectations of the Holy Spirit,

and his graces, from him; our courage in death; and our joyful hope of a resurrection and eternal life.

5. What continual matter for holy meditation should these two things furnish us with, *(viz.)* the death and resurrection of Christ, especially in all our addresses to God? *Heb.* x. 19. and iv. 14. How delightful and how encouraging are these ideas, in all our sacred and religious transactions with God, in life and in death. *We have boldness to enter into the most holy place by the blood of Jesus, and have such a High-Priest over the house of God* to introduce us. How divinely agreeable in all our behaviour, in our conversation in this world; *Gal.* vi. 14. By the death of *Christ we are dead to this world,* by the death of *Christ crucified to it, and the world crucified to us.* Col. iii. 1. We should live as those who are above, whose hearts are on high, *where Christ is at the right-hand of God.* Under our carnality and earthly-mindedness, let us govern ourselves by these meditations. Let us remember we are dead to sin. Under all our temptations to sin, *Rom.* vi. 2. let us be upon our guard, remembering our being united to Christ, in his death and his life.

If at any time we fall under doubts of the truth of our religion, let us look up to a risen Jesus. What better supports can we have under all our afflictions, sorrows, fears, weaknesses? *Rev.* i. 18. *He, who was dead, is alive, and lives for evermore.* Amen. Under the apprehensions of death; 1 *Cor.* xv. 57. *Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory over death and the grave* by a living Christ. Oh! what a shame is it for professors of a dying and a risen Saviour to be dead-hearted in religion, which is our sublimest hope; to be carnally-minded, or to be afraid of death?

6. If Jesus being dead, and being alive again is so great and important an article of our religion, and as it were the foundation on which it stands, then how wisely hath he ordered it in his gospel, that we should have a constant memorial appointed us, both of his death, and his resurrection? Of his death in the Lord's supper; 1 *Cor.* xi. 24. 25. and of his resurrection in the Lord's day; *Rev.* i. 10. it is the rising of Christ that gives a blessed name to this day; *Acts* xx. 7. *John* xx. 19, 20. 1 *Cor.* xvi. 2. On the first day of the week Christ appears in his holy ordinances, and saith, Peace be unto you, as he did to the apostles.

The primitive christians celebrated both these institutions on every first day of every week, that is, the christian sabbath, and the Lord's supper. We all agree to celebrate one of these, *(viz.)* his resurrection, every week on the first day; but how few are there that celebrate the memorial of his death in a constant attendance at the Lord's supper, in comparison of the multitudes who call themselves christians? Oh! let us take pleasure in these sacred memorials, and practise them both with steadiness and constancy, in remembrance of Jesus, who was dead, and is alive.

Let us remember at the Lord's supper a dying Saviour, and call to mind the great designs of his death, as many as we can *(viz.)* to witness the truth of his gospel: to fulfil ancient predictions of his death and his resurrection: to teach us to die as an example; but above all, to make atonement for our sins, and lay a foundation for pardoning grace, and our hope of acceptance with God. Let us remember every Lord's day to raise our thoughts to the heavenly world; where *Jesus is at the Father's right hand;* Col. iii. 1, 2.

7. Let us reflect on this delightful circumstance of our own death, and the new life of Christ, that, in both these, he was our *Pattern* and *Forerunner;* 2 Tim. ii. 8, 10—13,

If we die with him we shall also live with him; Heb. vi. 20. Must we lie down in death? Jesus, the Son of God, went through the dark valley before us, and lay down in the grave, and sanctified it to us for a sleeping place; 1 *Thess.* iv. 13—18. His death was attended with much more terror from God and man than ours is or can be. His death hath taken away the sting from ours. Did Jesus rise again from the dead? So shall we, if we are his sincere followers. He is our Head, *the first-born from the dead;* Col. i. 15. and our example. *Rom.* viii. 11. *The same Spirit shall quicken us, whatsoever nation we lived in,* Rome, or Jerusalem, Asia, or Corinth, or Great Britain, or in what age soever! 1 *Cor.* xv. 20, 23, 49. 2 *Cor.* iv. 14. And it will be a divine joy to meet holy Paul, our great apostle and our teacher, among the holy saints, who has gone through so many deaths and dangers to acquaint us with this gospel.

Was it so strange a thing to tell us, that one dead man, even Jesus, should be alive again after his death? How strange and glorious a sight will it be, when all the dead in Christ, thousands and ten thousands, shall be made alive, with their Lord Jesus at the head of them. Rejoice for ever in the Lord, and comfort yourselves with this divine consolation. *Amen.*

DISCOURSE III.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL,

GAL. iii. 21, 22.

IS THE LAW THEN AGAINST THE PROMISES OF GOD? GOD FORBID: FOR IF THERE HAD BEEN A LAW GIVEN WHICH COULD HAVE GIVEN LIFE, VERILY RIGHTEOUSNESS SHOULD HAVE BEEN BY THE LAW: BUT THE SCRIPTURE HATH CONCLUDED ALL UNDER SIN, THAT THE PROMISE OF FAITH BY JESUS CHRIST MIGHT BE GIVEN TO THEM THAT BELIEVE.

I HAVE long had a design to explain this text to you, because it seems to be a key, whereby we are let into the sense and meaning of this apostle, in his long and laboured arguments about the law and gospel, in his epistles to the Romans and the Galatians, and in the constant distinction that he there observes between them.

These Galatians, who were converted to the faith of Christ, had been closely beset by some zealous judaizing christians, who would fain have had them circumcised, and engaged to keep the Jewish law; *chap.* vi. 12, 13. The apostle, who well understood the liberty of the gospel, would not suffer them to be thus imposed upon; and therefore he argues, he allures, he threatens, he denounces, he uses all the proper methods of an apostle and a preacher of christianity, to establish them in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, and to guard them against yielding a tittle of compliance with the Jewish ceremonies and bondage.

He shews them, in this chapter, that the *promise* was given to Abraham, the great believer, with all the blessings of salvation contained in it, and to all those who imitate his faith, by trusting in the gospel of Christ; for *they are the seed of Abraham;* ver. 8, 9. And the law curses and condemns sinners; *Gal.* iii. 10. but it does not, it cannot save them; *ver.* 11. And that the law which came in four hundred years after the promise to Abraham, could not disannul the promise, or make it of none effect. The question arises then in the 19th verse; to what end then serveth the law? The answer is, to shew them their sins, and to keep alive a sense of sin among them, till Christ should come, who was to remove sin. Then comes in the objection of my text, *Is not the law then against the promises?* Is not the promise to Abraham contradicted by the law given to the Jews? No; by no means; for they were designed for two different purposes. The law was given for special and peculiar reasons in this life to the Jews: The promise was given to Abraham, and through him to all gentile as well as Jewish believers, for eternal life. Whereas, *if there had been a law given which could have given life,* i. e. eternal life, *verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise of faith by Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.*

Let us first examine the meaning of the words and phrases in my text.

Question 1. What is meant by law in general, and the law here spoken of in particular?—*Answer.* A law is the will of a superior, signified to us, or laid within the reach of our knowledge; which, if we obey, we are pronounced righteous, and obtain a right to any blessings promised to the obedient; but if we disobey we are guilty, and are laid under a sentence of condemnation. I say, the will of a superior, signified to us, or laid within our reach, because the gentiles, having not the revealed law of God, are a law to themselves; because the great and general rules of it are so far written in their hearts and consciences, as that they might be found out by reason and diligence, and honest enquiry; and in this sense they are set within our reach.

A law of God requires that the obedience of the creature be perfect, without defect, persevering to the end of the time which God hath appointed; and it must be also personal, or performed by himself, not by a surety or substitute. A law of God is such a constitution of God, as pronounces righteous those who fully comply with all its requirements; but it accepts of no less than it requires, nor does it own any thing for righteousness which is not perfect. *Rom.* ii. 7. *Who by patient continuance in well doing, (Greek* continuance in a good work, or in working good) *seek for glory, honour and immortality, eternal life.* Gal. iii. 10. *The man that doth them shall live in them.* James ii. 10. *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.* The Jewish law given at Sinai is the particular law here meant in the first part of the verse: The law which was given four hundred years after the promise; even the whole law of Moses, given to the Jewish nation.

Question 2. What is this promise?—*Answer.* The promise to Abraham, that all the nations should be blessed in him: that he and his seed should be heirs of an inheritance, and that God should be their God. It is, in short, the gospel of salvation contained in the promise given to Abraham. See *Gal.* iii. 8. *The scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, in thy seed shall all nations be blessed.* And it is called the promise, to distinguish it from the law of Sinai, and indeed from all proper laws: for, as I shall shew, the gospel does not save us in the way of a law; and therefore is not a proper law.

Question 3. What is meant by the law's giving life?—*Answer.* The word is ζωοποίησαι, which more naturally signifies quickening, or bringing a dead thing into life, by putting spirit or life into it, or by making it active in a vital manner: And so it might seem to imply giving new spiritual life to those who are dead in trespasses and sins. But the whole context rather constrains us to construe it, the giving a title to eternal life and happiness to men in a judicial or legal manner. This no law of God can do, as the apostle here asserts.

Question. 4. What is meant by righteousness?—*Answer.* A justifying righteousness, or a sentence of justification, a rectitude in the court of God, a freedom from punishment, and a right to life, which is the natural and proper effect of perfect obedience to any law of God given to men. But this blessing may be given also another way, *viz.* by the free grace of God, without any such obedience or righteousness of our own working.

Question 5. What are we to understand by the scripture concluding all under sin?—*Answer.* It signifies that the scripture, or the word of God, declares that all mankind are sinners, *there is none righteous, no, not one; Rom.* iii. 10. And, as sinners, they are

under a sentence of condemnation by the law of God, whatsoever law they are under whether the law of nature, or any laws of revelation: forasmuch as no man hath ever perfectly fulfilled any law that God had given him, and therefore all are come short of justification and life, *all are fallen short of the glory of God*, promised to obedience. See this at large, both declared, pronounced, and argued; Rom. iii. 9—20. *By the law shall no flesh living be justified*, &c.

Question 6. What is that promise given by the faith of Christ to them that believe? *Answer.* The promise of salvation, and the inheritance of heaven, typified by the land of Canaan, given originally and eminently to Abraham and his seed, and continued to those who are his spiritual seed, *viz.* who believe, or trust in Christ, who is the Messiah promised to Abraham: For *by faith in Christ we are made the children of Abraham;* Gal. iii. 29. *i. e.* as we are imitators of his faith, so we are invested in his benefits; *i. e.* those who imitate Abraham by trusting in the mercy of God through the Messiah, now he is come in the flesh, as Abraham trusted in him before he came, are accounted in the sight of God, the children or posterity of Abraham, and are partakers of those blessings of the inheritance of eternal life, which was promised to Abraham, under types and figures of the land of Canaan: *Gal.* iii. 7, 8, 9, 29. And as Abraham was made a child of God by trusting in the ancient promise, so we are made *the children of God by faith*, or trusting in Jesus Christ, the Messiah; *Gal.* iii. 26.

Having explained the words so particularly, I come to lay down these observations.

Observation 1. There is a constant and happy harmony between the several revelations of God to men. The promise to Abraham, or the gospel proposed and preached to him, is not contrary to the law given by Moses to the Jews. The law signifies the precepts of God revealed or discovered to men, more particularly to the Jews.

The gospel is the promise of the special blessings of God revealed or discovered to men, particularly to Abraham of old, and to us in a plainer manner, in these latter days.

Here I shall shew, in the first place, that the law and the gospel, *i. e.* the precept and the promise, cannot contradict one another; for they both run through all the different dispensations that ever God gave to the children of men since the fall. *Secondly*, The law and gospel do not contradict one another, for they are two different discoveries of the mind and will of God, made to men for very different purposes.

The law, since the fall of Adam, was given for the discovery or conviction of sin, and to shew men not only their duty, but also how exceeding sinful their natures are, and how unable they are to fulfil their duties perfectly; and therefore to lay them under a sense of guilt and condemnation. The promise, or gospel, was given for the relief of guilty man, whom the law had condemned, and to provide a righteousness, or justification, and life, for them, who, according to the law, had a sentence of death passed upon them. Therefore the law is called *the ministration of condemnation and death*, and the gospel *the ministration of the spirit and righteousness, or of justification and eternal life;* 2 Cor. iii. 7, 8, 9.

I confess, if the law had been given for the same end as the gospel, if the law had been given for man ruined and sinful, to obtain life and salvation by it as well as the gospel, then they might have been supposed to contradict one another, and the objection in my text had stood firm, and we could not have easily and fairly answered it; but since they are given for different purposes, they are but different revelations of

God, which are made happily subordinate one to another, and their different ends and designs are both attained. The law convinces and condemns sinners, and the gospel relieves and pardons them, justifies and saves them. See *Rom.* iii. 20—22, &c. *Gal.* iii. 10—14.

Objection 1. But doth not St. Paul himself say, that the law was ordained for life? *Rom.* vii. 10.

Answer 1. Perhaps St. Paul might mean only to shew his former opinion, that he thought *it was ordained to give life;* Rom. vii. 10, 11, 13. But supposing this to be the real design of the words, it signifies no more than that the law was designed or ordained to give life and happiness to every one that perfectly fulfilled it, *Rom.* ii. 7. and x. 5. But in Gal. iii. 10. *cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* The law could have given life indeed to Adam, if he had continued to obey it; and the law could give life still, if men were perfectly innocent, and perfectly obedient; for the law is not weak in itself, or unable to give life, but only through the infirmity of our flesh, to fulfil the law ever since the fall of Adam, by whom sin entered into our natures, and death entered into the world by sin. Rom. viii. 3, 4. *What the law could not do, in that it was weak* (not in itself, but) *through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and* (as a sacrifice) *for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.*

Answer 2. The Jewish law was brought in to shew how transgressions abounded; Rom. v. 20. Gal. iii. 19. *The law entered that sin might abound,* or might appear to abound, for *by the law is the knowledge of sin;* Rom. iii. 20.

Objection 2. Were none of the Jews saved, to whom the law of Sinai was given, and who were under this law? Were not all of them condemned by it?

Answer. Yes; they were all condemned by this law in the sight of God, considered as the Lord of souls or consciences: for they had all broke it in several instances: Nor could the services there required *purify their consciences;* Heb. ix. 9. But several of them were saved by the promise to Abraham, *i. e.* by the gospel, which was contained in the five books of Moses, and was often intermingled with the declarations of the law. The promise to Abraham, or the gospel, was not annulled, but continued, established, and ratified by the revelations of Moses. Gal. iii. 17. *The law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul it, that it should make the promise of none effect.* And Rom. iii. 21. *The righteousness of faith,* or justification of the gospel, *as witnessed by the law and the prophets.* So Abraham was saved; so David, by the grace of God, in the covenant of promise. *Rom.* iv. 3, 6. But *not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh* (no man living was or could) *be justified;* Rom. iii. 20. Gal. ii. 16.

Let us now recollect the explication of the words, law giving life and righteousness; in short, that we may more easily apply the words in reading what follows, and so proceed to the next observation.

Observation II. God would have appointed the justification of fallen man to have been by some law of his giving, if any law could have given such a poor, sinful, perishing creature justification, or a title to eternal life.

And the reasons for it may be these:

1. Because God is not wont to change his methods of government, where he sees

them effectual to attain the ends of that government. He is an unchangeable God, and doth not need second thoughts to mend his own first contrivances, or to change his conduct towards man, unless the case of his creatures, and the nature of things, require it. The law which was given at first to man in Paradise, and in innocency, had continued the same instrument of the government of God, if the case of fallen man had not required an alteration. But God was not willing all mankind, who were condemned by the law, should be utterly ruined, and perish in their folly; and therefore he changed his dispensation. The law could not give life, because it required more than fallen man could perform; and therefore, through the weakness of man's fallen and corrupted nature, the law became incapable of justifying man; *i. e.* it was weak to justify man by reason of the flesh, and to pronounce a sentence of righteousness or justification on him, because he was a feeble, guilty, disobedient creature. He had sinned already, and his passions and fleshly appetites were too strong for his reason, and are rising up continually against the commands of the law, and therefore God brought in the gospel, and gave a promise to our first parents as soon as they fell, and made his gospel, as well as his law, the instrument of governing his fallen creature man. *There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared;* Psalm cxxx. 4. *i. e.* that there may be piety and religion maintained in the world.

2. If the law could have given life to fallen man, righteousness or justification should have been by the law, that God might magnify this original law, and make it honourable. This would have shewn it was not only a law fit to govern innocent man, but to recover fallen man too. The law hath a great glory in it, in that it is the transcript of the holy name of God; it is *holy, just, and good;* Rom. vii. 12. and it would have been a great honour put on the law, if it could have recovered a sinful, ruined creation.

If fallen man could have performed this law, and answered the demands of it, here had been a glorious display of all the wisdom and majesty, goodness and holiness, which first made the law of God exemplified in the recovery of a poor, fallen, perishing creature, by this law of his. But this could not be. The law was weak, and insufficient for this purpose, through the flesh, *i. e.* through the weakness of fallen man.

3. If the law could have given life, righteousness should have been appointed and obtained for fallen man by it; because God would never have been at the expence of a gospel, if there had been no need of it, to recover fallen man, and to do that which the law could do. God does not lay out his thoughts or counsels, nor his riches of grace, in needless things, or in useless contrivances. Now if the law could have attained this end, *viz.* the justification and salvation of man, then the gospel had been needless; then all these glorious riches of grace, and these counsels of wisdom, and mysteries of mercy, had been in vain.

Surely if the law could have done this work, the blessed God would never have sent his own Son out of his bosom upon such a long journey to this sinful province of his dominion, to this lower world, to take flesh and blood upon him, and to be exposed to sufferings and labours, reproaches and shame, pain and anguish, and death, if the law could have done the work of the salvation of man without it. God hath more value for the peace, and honour, and life of his Son, than to expose it at this rate; but it is plain from scripture, that the Son of God was sent into the world to do *that which the law could not do;* Rom. viii. 3. These treasures of wisdom and goodness, these riches of grace, which appear in the gospel, were all laid out to save a ruined creature, whom

the law could not save; otherwise Christ *died in vain*, so the apostle saith expressly, *Gal.* ii. 21.

Observation III. No law could give life and salvation to poor fallen man.

Here let it be considered, that all laws are either moral, *i. e.* drawn from the nature of God and the creature; or they are positive, *i. e.* such as are appointed merely by the will of God, for particular purposes, and in particular seasons or circumstances. Again, moral laws are either such as belong to all mankind in general, whether innocent or sinful, or they are such as belong only to sinful and fallen man. Now none of all these sorts of laws can save sinful mankind. Let us prove it thus:

1. Moral laws, such as oblige all mankind in general, are contained in a due love to God and man; but fallen man can never be saved or justified by this law, because all these moral laws of God require perfect obedience, and cannot justify us without it. God is a most holy, a most wise, and righteous God, a most perfect being; and the relation between God and creatures, requires the creature should honour him, and obey him in perfection, and without any defect.

The moral law did require this perfection in the state of innocence; and, as it is taken into the constitution of the gospel, it does not diminish its requirements: It still requires perfection of obedience in all instances of thought, word, and deed, and that without defect or intermission. The gospel doth not abate or lessen the requirements of the law, but it shews a way to relieve us when we have broken it, or cannot fulfil it, and the reasons are plain.

If the law did not now require perfection of obedience, but only sincere, imperfect obedience, then the creature, if he were but sincere and honest, would have fulfilled the law, though he were not perfectly holy. And then imperfection of obedience would have been, as it were, established by the law, if it could obtain salvation for fallen man. Then also the imperfections of obedience to the law would not have been sin; for if they were, they could not have made up a saving righteousness.

The gospel is a constitution of grace, which accepts of less obedience from man than the law requires, and pardons the imperfect obeyer for the sake of Christ the Mediator; but still the law requires perfection, which mankind cannot pay. Now that man cannot pay it is evident, not only from the conscience of every man in the world, for if it be awakened to see the extent of the law, it must condemn itself; but the scripture expressly asserts in many places, Rom. iii. 10. *There is none righteous, no, not one.* Eccles. v. 20. *There is not a just man on earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.* 2 Chron. vi. 36. *There is no man who sinneth not.*

2. Moral laws, such as belong only to sinful man, and oblige him, can never justify a sinner, or save him. Let us enter into particulars: The requirements thereof are repentance for sin, sorrow and shame for past follies, and a displeasedness with self for being guilty; trusting or hoping in the forgiving grace of God, praying to him for pardon and grace, and universal watchfulness against every temptation, under a sense of former failings. This the very light of nature and reason teaches a sinner, as well as the word of God requires it. But this law cannot justify any creature, and that for two plain reasons.

1. Because all our repentance, or new endeavours after obedience, cannot make atonement for our past sins. A righteous governor doth not suppose that the tears, and sorrows, and repentance of criminals and malefactors, make any satisfaction to the public for his crimes, nor make due reparation to the government for his offences; nor are

sufficient to procure pardon for criminals. A penitent criminal is often executed to fulfil the demands of the law, and to secure the authority of the government. And what trifling things are our sorrows, to answer for the dishonour done to the law of God our Maker?

2. Because even our repentance itself, our hope or trust in grace, our prayer for mercy, our endeavours after new obedience, are all imperfect: whereas the law requires a perfection even of this sort of duties, a perfect hatred of sin, a perfect displeasure with self on account of it, perfect sincerity in every thought, word, and action, and perfect watchfulness in guarding against temptation, and striving after new holiness. But how shamefully do we fail in these, and destroy our claims to justification and life, even if we were to be tried only by this part of the law which requires repentance at the hand of criminals? We see then that no moral law can justify us.

3. Let us come to positive laws, *i. e.* such rites, and forms, or ceremonies, as are appointed by the mere free will of God, for particular purposes; such as sacrifices, circumcision, washings, baptism, the Lord's Supper, &c. These cannot justify us, because it is not in the power of any positive rites or ceremonies we can perform, to make up for the neglect of moral duties, or the violation of moral commands. They were never given for this end, nor appointed for this purpose. Heb. x. 1, 2, 5. *It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.* Nor can circumcision cut off the vices of the heart; no, nor can baptism wash us from our spiritual defilements. Nor can the Lord's Supper give us spiritual life and nourishment. It is not outward performances of any kind can stand instead of real holiness, much less can they answer for our past iniquities. No law of commandments, written in ordinances, can give righteousness and life to a sinful creature; for they were never ordained for that end.

Question. What were they ordained for then?

Answer 1. To shew us what sinful and defiled creatures we are, who have need of such washings, &c. and to give intimations that we are worthy of death, who need such sacrifices by the death of so many living creatures, to make atonement for our sins, and to die in our room?

Answer 2. To give some typical hints that there is grace to be obtained of God, and there is a way for atonement for sin and salvation provided for sinful man.

4. The last reason why no laws can justify or save fallen man is this, *viz.* All laws, whether moral or positive, may command, but they give no power to obey, and therefore cannot give life. It is the promise that gives life. It is the gospel and grace of God that enables us to obey the law, even so far as the best of men do obey it in this life. The law commands, but it gives no strength to obey. Rom. v. 6. *When we were without strength Christ died for us,* to obtain life and strength, to yield obedience to the law from principles of faith and love. It is the gospel that brings spirit and life with it, to incline our hearts to obey the law. Gal. iii. 2. *Received ye the spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?* Heb. viii. 10. *This is the covenant that I will make—after those days,—I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts.*

Objection. But is it a righteous thing with God to give man a law, which cannot be fulfilled, or perfectly obeyed by him?

Answer 1. It is righteous to give innocent man a law, which at first he was well able to fulfil; and this law continues in its force and demands, though man hath lost his innocency, and, by his wilful crimes, hath rendered himself unable to fulfil this law. The

sin of the creature, and his own, rendering himself unable to fulfil his Maker's law, doth not make void the law of his Maker, and abolish its commands.

Simile. Suppose a servant hath an order from his master to carry a message to his neighbour, if instead of going into the neighbour's house, whither he was sent, he goes into an alehouse or tavern, there drowns his senses and his natural powers in liquor, that he hath so weakened himself, that he can neither walk nor speak; he can neither go to the place where he was sent, nor deliver his message: I would ask, doth his master's commands cease, or is his command abolished? And is his authority at an end in this instance, because his servant hath rendered himself incapable of fulfilling it, either with his feet or his tongue? This would be an easy way to cancel a master's laws and commands, if the wickedness of a servant could have this effect.

Now apply this to the case between God and man, and see whether God may not be justified in continuing his law in its perfection of demands, though man hath lost or weakened his power to obey. Surely the moral law of God stands in force, requiring perfect obedience both of men and devils; and all intelligent beings, how feeble and impotent soever they have made themselves by their own crimes: For it is a law that arises from the nature of God and the creature, and from the relation that is between them; and therefore it is an everlasting law.

Answer 2. But God is still farther to be justified in this matter; for though man hath weakened himself by his fall, he hath not utterly lost his natural powers, his natural ability of obeying the law. He has an understanding, he has a freedom of will, to choose good and refuse evil; but his will is so obstinately bent upon sin, vanity, and folly, and his passions are grown so headstrong, that he will not give himself the trouble to subdue them: He willingly lets them bear him away from God: He is unwilling to obey; and this is called a moral inability. Now God may require such duties by his law, as through the weakness of the flesh, and the strength of appetite and passion in this frail state, man is morally or immediately unable to perform, though he hath a remote or natural power. An infinitely holy God cannot but command that we should never sin, never transgress the rule of righteousness, never break his pure and holy law; and yet, through the many infirmities of human nature, it is morally impossible we should perfectly keep this law, and live without sin. This Dr. Whitby himself (as much as he indulges the Arminian sentiments) confesses in his comment.

God doth not therefore lose his authority, or right of commanding perfect obedience and perfect holiness, though man, by his folly and sin, hath rendered his will averse to God, and his evil appetites and passions strong and ungovernable: So that, upon the whole, it is plain *the law is holy*, and *just, and good*, and yet cannot pronounce any man righteous, nor adjudge him to eternal life.

DISCOURSE IV.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL.

GAL. iii. 21, 22.

IS THE LAW THEN AGAINST THE PROMISES OF GOD? GOD FORBID: FOR IF THERE HAD BEEN A LAW GIVEN WHICH COULD HAVE GIVEN LIFE, VERILY RIGHTEOUSNESS SHOULD HAVE BEEN BY THE LAW: BUT THE SCRIPTURE HATH CONCLUDED ALL UNDER SIN, THAT THE PROMISE OF FAITH BY JESUS CHRIST MIGHT BE GIVEN TO THEM THAT BELIEVE.

THE SECOND PART.

OBSERVATION IV. Scripture *hath concluded all mankind under sin,* hath shut us all up as prisoners under condemnation. Here I have nothing to do, but to cite several texts of scripture, some of which have been before mentioned, to prove that no man hath perfectly fulfilled the demands of the law, and consequently, that all mankind lie under a sentence of condemnation, according to the law of God. *James* iii. 2. *For in many things we offend all.* And chap ii. 10. *Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all,* because he dishonours that authority which hath enacted all. Rom. ii. 9, 10. *Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil.* And chap. iii. 9, 10, 19, 20, 23. *Are we better than they? No, in no wise; for we have before proved both Jews and gentiles, that they are all under sin, as it is written, there is none righteous, no not one. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.* Gal. iii. 10, 11. *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for the just shall live by faith.*

Remark.—Here by the way we may take notice what is condemnation, and what is justification by the law of God. It is the sentence of God as it stands in the written law, or in the law of nature, pronouncing the creature, whether he be righteous or guilty, according to such different characters which are found upon him. It is not any new act put forth by God himself toward his creatures, but the constant sentence of his own law, declaring such a person righteous according to his performance of the law, or such a person guilty according to his non-performance of it. In like manner justification by the gospel is not a new act in God, but the sentence of his gospel, pronouncing humble penitents and believers in Christ pardoned, forgiven, and accepted unto eternal life.

According to the different characters of men, the word of God, *i. e.* his law or his gospel, pronounces them guilty and condemned, or pardoned, justified, and accepted of God,

unto eternal life. This is a very plain and easy doctrine to be apprehended by such weak creatures as we are.

Observation V. Man who is condemned by the law may be saved by the promise, *i. e.* by the promise of grace and reconciliation to God, which was given first to Adam, then to Abraham, and made further known to the people of God by Moses and David, and the prophets, according to the different revelations of God to man; but completed by the gospel of Christ, and the ministry of his apostles.

A promise to Adam of the destruction of the *works of the devil, by the seed of the woman*, as it is explained; 1 *John* iii. 8. A promise that God would be *our God*, and give us *an inheritance*, made to Abraham, *&c.* Gen. xvii. 7, 8. A promise confirmed by many types of the Jewish law. A promise of all the blessings of the new covenant, expressed *Heb.* viii. 10, 12. cited from the several prophets Jeremiah and Zechariah. *This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: And I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.—For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.* It is the same promise more particularly and fully set before us by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in his gospel, and by his blessed apostles in their writings, which, in plain and express language, includes in it not only pardon of sin and reconciliation to God, but the sanctification of our natures, and our preservation to eternal life, in a state of happiness which shall never end.

Observation VI. The way of obtaining an interest in these promised blessings, is through faith. It is to all that trust in the grace of the gospel, so far as it was manifested in the several ages of the world, *i. e.* to Adam, Abraham, and David; and as it is more fully manifested in and by Jesus Christ. It is obtained by a renouncing all claim by one's own works, and trusting in grace entirely.

If Adam was saved, it is in a way of grace and forgiveness through a Mediator, which was promised under the title of *the seed of the woman*, who should bruise the head of the serpent; and which was typified by sacrifices, and intimated by God's favourable dealings with Adam after his fall, and which promise was accepted and received by Adam's trusting or hoping in this grace.

If Abraham is saved, it is in a way of grace and forgiveness; which was promised under the title of that seed of his, *in whom all nations should be blessed:* and in that language of mercy, that God would be his God, and would give him an inheritance, of which Canaan was a type and figure. And Abraham believed, or trusted in this, *and it was imputed to him for righteousness;* Rom. iv. 3. *i. e.* unto his justification and acceptance.

If David was saved, it is in a way of grace and forgiveness: *Psalm* xxxii. 1, 2. *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity;* Rom. iv. 6, 7.

If christians are saved, it is in a way of grace and forgiveness still, which was promised to Abraham, which is revealed more particularly by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came to confirm and to fulfil the former promises, and to obtain this pardon by the sacrifice of himself. And by his own perfect obedience and sufferings, he laid a foundation for the justification of sinful creatures. If they are saved, it is not by their performing the law in any sense, but by trusting in forgiving grace, revealed and manifested through

Jesus Christ. It is by trusting in another, and not in themselves; as *Rom.* iv. explains from verse 17 to the 22.

It is not in a way of claim of righteousness and eternal life, but in a way of humble dependance on grace. *The Pharisees boasted that they were righteous, and despised others.* Luke xviii. 9. The young ruler, in the gospel, speaking of the law of God, said, *all this have I kept from my youth;* Matt. xix. 20. The Jews sought for justification by the works of the law, and rejected Christ. *Rom.* ix. 31. But St. Paul, *by the sight of the law is dead to the law;* i. e. to all hopes of righteousness and life by it; *Gal.* ii. 16, 19. and seeks to be pardoned, accepted, and justified, by trusting in what Christ hath done and suffered on his account. And so all christians. *Rom.* iii. 22. And in this sense the gospel *justifieth the ungodly;* Rom. iv. 5. *i. e.* those who have no righteousness of their own to plead, whose best obedience is all defective.

Question. But doth this gospel save and justify a man that hath no regard to the law of God? How is his obedience to the law or holiness secured, if a man be justified, or pronounced righteous, and acquitted of sin, and accepted to eternal life, by believing or trusting in the promises of grace? Surely many wicked men will say, "I trust in the promise of pardon through Jesus Christ; and is this enough? is there no security that these believers shall be obedient to the law, as far as they can, though they cannot obey it perfectly?" *Answer.* Yes, there is abundant security for their diligence in duty to the law, though they can never work out a righteousness for themselves, to be justified by the law. Let these reasons be considered:

1. It is the great design of the gospel to restore us to holiness as well as to happiness: and therefore the law, in the commands of it, runs through all the gracious dispensations of God to fallen man, as I have shewn you: And God will have no regard to them in a way of grace, who have no regard to his law in a way of obedience. The law constantly requires and points out our duty, it shews us our sin, it lays us under condemnation, and makes us seek a refuge in the gospel of forgiveness. Now the gospel is not prepared for such as knowingly and wilfully renounce the law of God, which is holy, and just, and good, and who persist in this practice, and abandon the commandments of it.

Can it be ever expected that the great God should pardon and save those rebels through Jesus Christ, who knowingly and wilfully persist in their rebellions? God forbid. The very light of nature will not suffer us to believe this. This would be to *make Christ the minister of sin, and to build again the things which Christ came to destroy;* Gal. ii. 17, 18. For it is the design of all the blessings of the gospel, to make us conformable to God, and to this law, which is the unchangeable image of his holiness. The great design of it is to make us practise *love to God and our neighbour, which is the fulfilling of the law,* as far as our state of frailty permits; *Rom.* xiii. 10.

The design of the grace of God in Christ Jesus is, *that we might be holy and without blame before God, in love.* Are *we chosen in Christ?* It is *that we may be holy;* Eph. i. 2, 3. Doth God forgive us? It is *that we may fear, and love, and serve him;* Psalm cxxx. 4. —There is *forgiveness with God that he may be feared.* Are we redeemed with the blood of Christ? It is *that we might be a peculiar people, zealous of good works;* Tit. ii. 14. Doth the *grace of God bring salvation to us? It teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live righteously, soberly and religiously, in this present evil world;* Tit. ii. 11, 12.

We are under the law still unto Christ, as it is the rule whereby Christ governs his church, while he pardons their failures and imperfections: But we are not under the law

as it is the rule of judgment, and condemns all that have not fulfilled it. We are freed from the curse of the law, but not from the obligation to obedience. So the apostle, 1 *Cor.* ix. 21. All believers have this freedom from the curse of the law, that from a new principle of holiness and love, they may fulfil the commands of the law, as far as our present circumstances will admit: Rom. vii. 6. *But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve God, not in the spirit of terror and bondage, but in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter*, i. e. by a new principle of holiness, wrought in us by the Spirit of God, as a principle of love and obedience.

2. The gospel gives us encouragement and strength to fulfil the duties of the law, and engages us to hope in God, that we may love him, please and serve him, as a forgiving and reconciling God, which the broken law, with all its commands, threatenings, and terrors, doth not, and could never do. The law speaks only condemnation and death. *As many as labour for life under the law, and would be justified by the law, are under the curse, and may despair of life;* Gal. iii. 10. Now despair is no spring of obedience, and hopeless labour is very feebly and negligently performed; but hope is a powerful and lasting principle of holiness; 1 John iii. 3. *And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure.* 1 Tim. iv. 10. *Therefore we both labour and suffer reproach;* i. e. in doing the will of God; *because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe.* The devils go on in sinning, because they despair; but man hath hope set before him, that he may be encouraged to obedience, and allured to pursue holiness, from a principle of love and gratitude. If we are made new creatures, how can we choose but love and honour the law of God, who hath saved us by his gospel, and changed our unhappy state from sin and death, to hope and joy. Besides, it is the gospel that gives us *the sanctifying spirit*, as I said before? *Gal.* iii. 2, 14. and *Heb.* viii. 10. This is that *new covenant* according to which *he writes his law in our hearts.*

3. No *faith* in the grace of God will justify men, *but that which worketh by love;* Gal. v. 6. and produceth the good fruits of obedience. *Abraham obeyed the call of God;* James ii. 22, 26. And in this sense his works wrought together with his faith towards his justification. Not that his imperfect works in themselves do any thing to justify him, but his sincere imperfect works were the effect of his faith, and proved his faith to be alive, and true, and saving. Things are said to be done in scripture when they are declared or manifested to be done: So Abraham *is said to be justified by works,* when his works declared and manifested his faith, whereby he was justified; *James* ii. 25, 26. David's faith in forgiveness was such as was accompanied with sincerity and piety: *Psalm* xxxii. 2. *In whose spirit there is no guile.* It requires confession of sin, repentance, humiliation, and new watchfulness; *verse* 5, 6. *Gal.* v. 6. It must be such *a faith that purifieth the heart,* and works obedience from a principle of love; *Acts* xv. 9. *Tit.* ii. 5, 7, 8. *They who believe in Christ Jesus must be careful to maintain good works.*

4. Without repentance and a change of heart, so as to love and to obey the law of God, we can never be fit for that happiness which God promises, and which the creature wants: Without holiness of heart we can never be prepared for heaven, which consists in the blissful vision of God; nor indeed are we capable of it. *Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God;* Matt. v. 8. *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord;* Heb. xii. 14. Indeed none can be truly happy but those who are sanctified and assimilated to the holy

Jesus. A child of satan, and an enemy of righteousness, and of the law of God, can never be happy in the midst of the children of God, who have his law written in their hearts, and are ever practising obedience to his law in perfection.

Holiness indeed is a part of salvation, which consists in a release from the bondage of sin, and the power of it in our own hearts, as well as from the guilt and punishment of it in our persons. And the man who professes to receive the gospel of Christ, and hope in God for salvation, he doth not know what he professes, if he does not hope for holiness, and long for it, and desire it. If he goes to trust in Christ as a Saviour, merely from the wrath of God and hell, he doth not accept of Jesus as such a Saviour as the gospel represents him; *i. e. a Saviour from sin*; Matt. i. 21. as well as from hell and wrath.

Lastly, Remarks drawn from the whole text, thus opened, explained, and proved.

Remark 1. See why St. Paul always denies justification to be obtained by the law, *i. e.* by any law whatsoever: *viz.* because none have fulfilled, or can fulfil, any moral law of God in perfection, and a law requires perfect obedience, in order to justification by it: Nor is it in the nature or power of it to justify those who are under it, and yield not perfect obedience. *Cursed* be *every one that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law, to do them;* Gal. iii. 10. The epistles to the *Romans* and *Galatians* are full of this doctrine. Whether it be the law of nature; *Rom.* ii. 14, 15. or whether the law under which the Jews were, which includes the moral, ceremonial, and political precepts of it; Rom. iii. 19, 20, 23. *all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. By the works of the law*, any law whatsoever, *no flesh shall be justified.* Man doth not, cannot obtain life by any law; it cannot give life.

In this sense all laws are laws of works: *Do this and live*, is their language and sense. *The man that doth them shall live in them*; Gal. iii. 12.

2. See here to what a wretched and deplorable state of guilt and misery are we fallen, that no law which God can make in our circumstances can save us. God cannot make a law which doth not require perfect holiness, in thought, word, and deed: He cannot make a law which allows sin and imperfection: For this would be, as it were, to establish iniquity by a law, which the holy God cannot do. The holy nature of God, as governor of his creatures, cannot but command them to be perfectly holy, under whatsoever gracious dispensations he may place them, for the relief of their guilt and weakness, and distress. His law still commands what fallen impotent creatures cannot fully obey; and therefore we are miserable.—What a hideous ruin hath the first man brought into human nature, and spread over all this lower creation? It hath weakened all our powers, hath turned our hearts away from God, hath debased our inclinations to sense and flesh, and vanity, and made God's own rational creatures incapable of being made happy by any law that he should give them, when taken in the strict and proper sense of a law.

3. Even the gospel of Christ, considered as a mere law, as requiring duty, and promising a reward upon full performance, cannot give life to sinful man: For whether you take it in a large sense, and consider it as including the moral law, taken into the hand of Christ the Mediator, still it diminishes not its commandments: it requires perfect holiness, and abates nothing in its demands. Or whether you take it in a more limited sense, as requiring faith and new obedience, sincere diligence and watchfulness, yet, considered as a law, it requires the practice of these duties in greater perfection, than the best of saints or christians ever practised them; otherwise they would not sin in coming short of

what the gospel requires; and therefore they cannot give life, if God should strictly judge us according to these gentle commands of the gospel. And therefore you find, when the apostle speaks of justification according to the gospel, he is positive, peremptory, and universal, in his exclusion of all works of the law, from justifying us; as in *Rom.* iii. and *Gal.* iii.

He calls the gospel therefore *a promise, the grace of God, the new covenant*, &c. that he may not be supposed to speak of it as justifying us, under the notion of a law. He never calls the gospel *a law*, but in such a rhetorical or figurative sense, by way of catachresis, or a very strong metaphor, *the law of faith;* as in Rom. iii. 27. It is as if he should say, if we must call it a law, it is a mere law of faith, or trusting in the mercy of God.

Question 1. What is the gospel then? and how doth it justify us and give life? *Answer.* Not as fulfillers of a law, and thereby obtaining a claim to life, but as depending upon mere mercy. The gospel is a constitution of the blessed God, whereby he accepts less obedience at our hands than the law requires: and that, not to make up a righteousness for our acceptance, but that God may receive us through grace, for the sake of his Son Jesus Christ, who wrought a perfect obedience, or complete righteousness, to answer that law, and died to make atonement for our sins, and *redeemed us from the curse of the law*, which we had deserved. This is the express language of the gospel taught us by St. Paul; *Rom.* iii. 23, 24. *All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;* i. e. of that glory which we should have obtained by a perfect obedience: But when we are justified, it is done *freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.* The law condemns us as sinners, and we must be sensible of this condemnation. The gospel shews us, that we must trust or depend merely on forgiving grace, and not pretend to any righteousness of our own, and to claim life by obeying the law ourselves. It is by our faith or dependance, not by our works, and any claim of merit. The whole strain of the apostle's writing to the Romans hath this view in the five or six first chapters.

Question 2. Is it not, therefore, matter of blame for us to call the gospel a law? or the new law? *Answer.* The word law, when taken in a strict sense, for the will of a sovereign prince, revealed and requiring perfect obedience of his subjects, and pronouncing a subject righteous only upon this obedience, is the true notion and idea of a law: In this sense the gospel is not a law, for it doth not pronounce any persons righteous, and accepted to the favour of God, on account of a perfect obedience performed by them to any command which was given them.

But if a law be taken in a large sense for any constitution of a governor whereby he graciously accepts at our hands less than his law requires, and pardons those offenders who are sincerely willing and desirous to obey his law, and who trust in his mercy; then the gospel may be called a law. Torah, in the Hebrew, is used in this large sense for the gospel; *Isaiah* ii. 3. *Out of Zion shall go forth the law*, &c. and other places.

And Νομος, in the Greek, may be enlarged to such an extensive sense also: But originally it signifies, that which distributes to every one their due reward, according to their merit or their services; and in this sense the gospel cannot be a law. St. Paul does not usually call it so; nor can I think it the best way for ministers to represent it thus. Yet after all, it is but a sort of difference in words if we do but explain the things in the right manner, and guard against those errors, which we are liable to fall into on either side. Nor would I be angry with any man who considerately and sincerely thinks this the best

way of representing and explaining the gospel, any further than to say, that St. Paul did not think it the best way; and I am much of his mind.

4. How much should our souls bless God for the introduction of the gospel into the world, at the first promise; and even for all the promises of this *new covenant*, especially in this last and best, and brightest edition, and *the administration of it by Jesus Christ, and his Spirit?* As it is expressed and explained in *Heb.* viii. 10, 12. Have we not sometimes had an awakening and painful sense of guilt? Have we never thought ourselves sinners, and feared the eternal anger of God, and cried out for salvation, from the condemning sentence of the broken law?

And when we have resolved, and watched, and laboured again to fulfil the holy law of God, and failed in many instances, have we not bewailed ourselves as weak and impotent creatures, as well as under the guilt of so many offences, repeated and abounding? Oh what abundant reason have we to bless God for the gospel of his grace, through Jesus Christ, wherein our only hope lies, and all our salvation! Even all our hopes of pardon and acceptance with God, as well as all our strength to do the will of God, and obey his law, so far as christians are enabled and expected to do in this life. Let us fly from the law, and its curses and condemnation, to the refuge and hope which the gospel has set before us, and live there daily by faith in the Son of God the Saviour; for there only lies our safety from the wrath of God, and eternal destruction.

5. What a glorious harmony will appear in the review of all the dispensations of God at the last day, between the law and the gospel? The law was the instrument of God's government of his creatures, and the rule of his justice, from the beginning of the world to the end: But the gospel is the instrument of his grace for our salvation. The law is the rule, guiding and teaching all the saints in the ways of holiness, convincing of sin, and condemning all sinners, and driving them to seek refuge in grace: And the gospel is the noble and divine remedy, discovering that grace, whereby alone we can be saved.

And why may not these sentiments be part of our transporting and beatifying contemplations in the heavenly state? It is generally agreed by our divines, that the various providences of the life and state we have passed through in this world, whether they have been painful or pleasant, shall be the matter of our delightful review and meditation; especially so far as they have been the happy means of our sanctification, and our preparation for the final blessedness of the heavenly state.

I am well assured, there will be abundant matter of joy and thankfulness found in these different dispensations of God, in his *bringing many sons to glory;* and there will be ample instances of his providential care, and glorious examples of his righteousness and his grace, in a thousand particular transactions of the blessed God, and our Lord Jesus Christ his Son, with the children of his grace: And perhaps there shall be such discoveries made to us, of the righteousness and the grace of God in his holy law and his gospel, among these divine transactions, as will elevate our souls into higher raptures of gratitude and joy, and furnish our tongues with pleasant and everlasting hallelujahs.

The saints in that day shall cheerfully and thankfully recount the awful voice of God in the commands and terrors of his law, since these were the blessed means of awakening their stupid consciences, and of stirring them to a hasty flight to Jesus and his gospel, as the only and all-sufficient *refuge* of sinful and guilty souls. Happy creatures! who turned their eyes to his grace, when they were thus self-condemned, and trembling for fear of the immediate execution of the divine threatenings of his law.

How glorious and delightful will be the moments of these souls, when they shall review the first glimpses they had by divine grace, of the salvation and hope which was to be found for them, in the encouraging language of the gospel and the promises? What new songs will arise to the Redeemer in this review of those past events? What echoes of praise *to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb,* while the inhabitants of the blessed world are pursuing and tracing out backward the ancient steps of the grace of God towards their recovery from the sin and ruin of the first Adam, and their entering into the covenant of salvation, *through Jesus Christ the second?* He was the ever-blessed antitype of the first Adam, the great head and lord of life and everlasting blessedness, to all who are sanctified and saved. *Honour,* and *glory,* and *power,* be to his holy name *for ever and ever. Amen.*

DISCOURSE V.*

THE EARLY APPOINTMENT OF THE ATONEMENT OF CHRIST MANIFESTED.

REV. xiii. 8.

THE LAMB SLAIN FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD.

THE FIRST PART.

IN order to make the sense of these words easy and plain, we must take into our counsel three other texts of the New Testament: *viz.*

I. 1 *Pet.* i. 18—20. *Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold,—but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb, without blemish, and without spot. Ver.* 20. *Who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifested in these last times for you.* This shews us, that this Lamb was Jesus Christ, who was offered a sacrifice for the sins of the world, and thereby takes them away; *John* i. 29.

II. *Acts* xv. 18. *Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world.* And therefore this great work, of redeeming sinners by the death of his Son Jesus, (as 1 *Pet.* i. 20.) was also known to him.

III. *Rom.* iv. 17. *God quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not, as though they were: i. e.* speaketh sometimes of things not yet done, as though they were done; therefore this Lamb is said to be slain from the foundation of the world, because it was by virtue of his death, many other things were appointed.

God hath before the foundation of the world, ordained all things that regard the salvation and recovery of man, from the ruins of his fall. Sometimes the holy scripture speaks of those things, which were originally designed and decreed, as though they were actually done, though perhaps it was many ages afterwards before these things had any actual being. It is in this sense that our Lord Jesus Christ is said to be *the Lamb slain, before the foundation of the world; i. e.* he was decreed and determined to be the Saviour of mankind; and for this end he was appointed to be a sacrifice of atonement for our sins, even *before God laid the foundations of the world;* Eph. i. 4, 5. He appeared as *the Lamb slain* for this purpose, and with this design, in the eye of God, who sees all things in one single view, whether they be things past, present, or to come. God the Father kept Jesus Christ his Son ever in his eye, in this view, through all his transactions with the children of men.

It is generally supposed that Adam stood in the state of innocence but a few days at most, or a very short time after his creation, though our Lord Jesus Christ came not into this world, nor took flesh and blood upon him, of the substance of the virgin Mary,

* Sermons preached at Berry-street, December 1744 and 1745.

till about four thousand years afterwards. Many ages ran out amongst the inhabitants of this world in that time, and even some of the transactions of God in his own eternity, before the foundation of the world, are reasonably supposed to be derived from this very idea, in the mind and appointment of the blessed God; because he had originally appointed, that Jesus Christ should in due time take flesh and blood, and be offered as a sacrifice for the sins of men.

Here we shall first enquire, what are those early transactions of the blessed God in eternity, or in time, which may be supposed to have been any ways influenced by this view of our Lord Jesus Christ? and the answers are these:

1. It was in this view that God at first decreed and designed to save and recover any part of fallen man from their ruin, sin, and misery; and chose thousands of the race of sinful mankind to be restored to his favour and to his image; Eph. i. 4, 5, 7. *Behold my servant whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth;* Isa. xlii. 1. That so God might have a proper atonement made for all their sins, by our Lord Jesus Christ, in order to be reconciled to them, and to reconcile them to himself that they might be holy and without blame.

It would be too long at present to enter into this enquiry, why God required an atonement for sin, or why his justice and his grace would not unite in the salvation of fallen man without it: The great God thought it unbecoming his supreme majesty, and his character, to deal thus in a way of absolute mercy with men; and as he has determined it so in his word, this is enough for us to acquiesce therein: As Heb. ii. 10. *It became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.* Τελειωσαι, *i. e.* as critics in the Greek language expound it, to consecrate, sanctify, or finish this Captain of salvation for this service, by an atoning sacrifice.

God was pleased to make his beloved Son, Jesus Christ, his first elect; *Isa.* xlii. 1. and he chose all the rest in him; Eph. i. 4. *According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.* He was resolved to set him up at the head of all the saved number, who was his own Son, that he should be their forerunner into heaven, and have the honour of redeeming all the sons of God, and bringing them back unto the Father: and he decreed him to be the great sacrifice for the expiation of the sins of all his chosen and favourite sons: He has redeemed them all with his blood.

2. It was in the view of Jesus Christ, as the great Mediator and sacrifice, that God appointed any further communion, or any favourable communications, between himself and his fallen creature man. It was in this view that he appointed, there should be any approach of fallen man towards himself: It was in this view he gave him the first promise, and the first hope of mercy, even that *the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent;* Gen. ii. 15. by whom mankind was deceived to their ruin and destruction; and by appointing Jesus Christ to be *a sacrifice for sin:* It was prophesied that his *heel*, or the lower part of his nature, *i. e.* his body, *should be bruised*, in order to *break the head of the serpent;* as it is explained, 1 John iii. 8. *For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil; i. e.* his tyranny and dominion over man. This seed of the woman was the appointed sacrifice for this purpose; *Gen.* iii. 15. It was with this view that God enquired after lost man in the

garden of paradise, in order to recover and save him by his Son Jesus; *Gen.* iii. 9. *Adam, where art thou?* And he gave him the promise of recovery by this means. And as God afterwards appointed it, that *no man should come to the Father but by the Son;* John xiv. 6. so he revealed himself as making his way towards fallen Adam, by this man Jesus; and it is by him that all that are brought back again to God have been appointed to draw near to him ever since; for he is the only appointed way.

It is also very probable that God might make clearer discoveries to our first parents, in the midst of their ruined and dismal state, in and with this first promise, than Moses, the divine historian, has given us an account of, because this was to be the beginning and first pledge of their hope of any acceptance with God, and their expectation of life and salvation. Let me here speak one awakening word to fallen sinners: Did you never give yourselves leave to think how great your guilt and destruction is, and how terrible your misery and danger? and do you never consider that it was in and by Jesus Christ, as the appointed sacrifice for our sins, that God made his first steps towards you in a way of restoration and recovery? This should not be utterly neglected and forgotten by sinners. See how early was the love of God to fallen man.

3. It was in this view of Jesus Christ, as a propitiatory sacrifice, that God instituted sacrifices to be offered up by Adam, immediately after his fall, as it is recorded by Moses. God forbid that ever we should imagine, that the great God left this important affair of offering sacrifices to reconcile and appease an angry God, to the mere invention of vain and foolish man: And how can we suppose that it should enter into the heart of man, that God should be pleased with such sacrifices as the cutting and burning of his living creatures in the fire, in order to please him after their first sin? It is very evident that God appointed the skins of beasts to be their first covering, but these very beasts were not then appointed by God the Creator to be slain for the food of man, till the days of Noah; and therefore, it must be out of the beasts slain for sacrifice, that the Lord God made coats of skins, and clothed Adam, and his wife Eve. And it is highly probable that their clothing was made out of the skins of the beasts that were sacrificed, to guard them from the cold winds, and storms, and from any of the inconveniences of the air and sky that might befal them, for want of such covering; Gen. iii. 31. *And unto Adam and his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.*

It is further evident, that these sacrifices were not merely sacrifices of thanksgiving and acknowledgment to God for his mercies, as men are too often ready to suppose. When *Cain brought to God the first fruits of the ground;* Gen. iv. 3. if it was done merely as an offering of thankfulness, it is manifest that Abel also, Gen. v. 4. *brought of the firstlings of his flock, and the fat thereof;* and it is very plain that Abel found acceptance with God, but Cain did not; *ver.* 5. And as it is repeated, Heb. xi. 4. *By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.* And probably this was the difference, because by the sacrifice and death of the living creatures, there was an acknowledgment made of sin, and of sinful man's desert of death, by some intimation from heaven; and this was accepted of God as an atonement or substitute, in the room of the sinner, or a typical propitiation for sin. This seems to be implied in that question of Balak to Balaam: Micah vi. 6, 7. *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,* &c. Or *shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?* It is very

natural for man, under a sense of the guilt of sin, to enquire how he shall appear before a holy God with acceptance? And God, as it were in answer to such a supposed enquiry, directs Adam to the sacrifice of beasts, as an atonement for sin; *i. e.* as a sort of ransom for the forfeited life of man. And this is the most natural and most easy sense of things, and the best account of the original of sacrifices, and of the prevalence and continuance of that custom almost all over the world: And this is the fairest account of the original tradition of Adam's first sacrifice after his fall from God, and the sense of his anger.*

4. It was in the view of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, the Lamb of God, that all the schemes of the Jewish sacrifices, all the slaughter and burnt-offerings of the animals, and the pourings out and sprinklings of blood, and the washings with water in the Jewish sacrifices, were first appointed as figurative methods, to cleanse them from sinful defilements: And the Lord Jesus Christ at last appeared, or was set forth hereby, as the great deliverer from the wrath of God, and as typified under all these figures and shadows. *Heb.* x. 1—12. *The law having a shadow of good things to come, but not the very image of the things,* those sacrifices were all imperfect as to the grand design; for they could not cleanse the consciences of men from guilt before God; *Heb.* x. 1, 2. In this respect Christ alone was the true sacrifice; *Heb.* ix. 11, 12.

And this was the reason of shedding of the blood of beasts according to the law; *Heb.* ix. 14, 15, 22. For there was no remission without blood. The blood of Christ by virtue of his union with the true God, had infinite and immortal value in it. *Christ, the Lamb of God, offered himself without spot unto God, to purge our consciences from dead works,* (or from works that deserve death) *that we might serve the living and true God with acceptance:* Thus Israel, considered as a national church, derived this advantage from our Lord Jesus Christ. And it was with this view that the national atonement, or the bullock that was offered every year for the sins of the whole nation, *Lev.* xvi. and xvii. chapters, attained its proper effect, and delivered the whole nation from national guilt, and that destruction which the justice of God might have brought upon it for sin.

5. It was in the view of this great sacrifice, slain from the foundation of the world, that God pardoned the personal guilt of men, and forgave thousands of sins under the Old Testament, and spared the guilty, each of them in their day and season, and took away the guilt of their iniquities. So David was forgiven his adultery and his murder, crimes of the deepest dye, for which David knew of no sacrifice; *Psalm* li. 16. and for which no man could be pardoned or justified by any ceremonies in the law of Moses. And therefore the apostle says; *Acts* xiii. 38, 39. *By this man,* even Jesus Christ, *there was forgiveness* appointed for those sins for which no sacrifices were ordered by the law of Moses, nor any sacrifices were offered, or accepted, according to the levitical law.

* As it is generally supposed by our divines, that it was Jesus the Son of God, who, in the name of his Father, appeared to Adam in the garden after his sin, and had this conversation with him; so it is not unlikely that God, in the person of his Son Jesus, taught Adam how to manage these sacrifices, by taking off the skins, and cutting the beasts into proper parts, and burning them; of which there is a hint given in the Greek translation of the septuagint; *Gen.* iv. 7. which is not found in the Hebrew original at present, where God says to Cain, *if thou hast rightly offered, but hast not rightly divided the sacrifice, thou hast sinned.* And if this is supposed to be a true account of the matter, then Jesus Christ himself, in a preludium to his incarnation was the first high-priest, and he that taught Adam first to offer a sacrifice, and so, in the sight of God, it was accepted from the hands of him, whom God had constituted an everlasting high-priest; though, at the same time, the sacrifice of Christ, the Lamb of God, might be typified by the slaughter and sacrifice of the beast itself.

Rom. iii. 24, 25. *God has set him forth as a propitiation through faith in his blood; to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.** But even at that time there was *forgiveness with God* in the view of Christ; for even David speaks with much freedom in the xxxii. Psalm, and elsewhere, of the pardon of sin.

It was also through this blood of the Lamb slain, that Solomon was pardoned his many heinous and grievous sins; *i. e. the Lamb of God* slain in the view of the Father, as an atoning sacrifice *from the foundation of the world;* And through the same blood God forgave the repeated crimes of Manasseh the king, who had filled Jerusalem with slaughter; and all the saints, and all the kings, who had ever been sinners, and were saved, it was in this view of *the blood of the Lamb:* always supposing trust in the mercy of God, together with sincere repentance, and return to God, was found at the same time. Blessed Jesus, how early and how extensive was this salvation through thy blood, even before it was actually offered!

6. The gospel of the salvation of sinful man was contrived and appointed by the great God, in this view of Jesus, *the Lamb of God*, the great expiatory sacrifice, *slain from the foundation of the world:* And it is for this reason that the doctrine of this atonement for sin by sacrifice, runs through all the parts and forms of religions which God early appointed in the world, and the several religions which man, under the divine appointment of God, ever practised. *Heb.* x. 12—18. Where there is a particular account given of the covenant of grace, from the language of the prophets. *This man after he had offered one sacrifice for sin, for ever sat down on the right hand of God;—for by one offering, he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified; whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us; for after he had said before, this is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws in their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.* These are the blessings of the gospel of Christ; here is the sanctifying Spirit included, as well as the blood of atonement; here is a purification of our natures, as well as a justification of our persons, introduced in the view of this *Lamb that was slain:* And therefore John the Baptist might say, in more senses than one; *John* i. 29. *Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.* He takes away the guilt of sin by his atoning sacrifice, and the power of sin in the soul, by the sanctification of his spirit. All the blessed promises of the gospel, in the Old Testament and in the New, are but the language of this new covenant, which arose from the view and foresight of the blood of this dying Lamb; which was therefore called *the blood of the everlasting covenant;* Heb. xiii. 20.

Let me ask ye now, O sinners! whose consciences are exposed to agonies through the guilt of sin, and whose souls are in danger of being captivated into new offences, by the power of sin within you: Do you not see how necessary these blessings are to your salvation? How can you have your sins pardoned, or your souls accepted with God unto eternal life, or renewed unto holiness, if you have not an interest in the salvation wrought by the blood of the Lamb?

7. It was with this design, and in the view of this blood of Jesus, the great sacrifice,

* We translate this word forgiveness, as though it were Ἄφεσις, remission, but the word is πάρεσις, which properly signifies the passing by of sin; that is, that God did not actually punish them: Though the Cocceian writers do not make a just inference from this, that therefore no sins were pardoned under the Old Testament, but merely the punishment of them delayed or neglected.

that all the ordinances of the New Testament itself were instituted: Baptism itself had something of this signification; for so said Ananias the christian to Paul, when he was first struck down to the ground by the vision from heaven. *Why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord Jesus;* Acts xxii. 16. The water of baptism came to have a cleansing and sanctifying virtue from the foresight and eternal mercy of God, who appointed Jesus Christ to be slain for a sacrifice; which is also intimated; *Heb.* x. 22. *Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed,* i. e. in baptism, *with pure water.* There is no need of the particular description of the institution of the Lord's supper; *Matt.* xxvi. 28. *Rev.* i. 5. wherein *the blood of Jesus Christ* is said to wash us from our sins. *The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin;* 1 John i. 7.

8. It was in the view of this *Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,* that there was a way made, provided, and prepared, for our Lord Jesus Christ to arise from the dead. The apostle to the Hebrews, in *chap.* xiii. *ver.* 20. is express in this sentiment. *The God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant; i. e.* the covenant of grace and pardon, which began as soon as man had sinned, and remains to this day, even to all everlasting, to speak peace and pardon to sinners. Every circumstance in this part of the history of our Saviour was appointed in this view. He died, and lay in the grave for a short season, to prove the truth and reality of his death; and he arose again, to confirm the predictions of the ancient prophets; for all the works of God, concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, and his transactions in life and in death, were known to him from the beginning of the world; and every step of his sufferings, and his rising from the grave, was all ordained with a view to this covenant, by which *he was raised from the dead;* Acts xi. 18. All the decrees of God and all the predictions of the prophets, all the types of the old Jewish law, and all the promises of God with regard to his Son Jesus, were doubtless appointed, accomplished, and fulfilled, with regard to this great sacrifice.

The holy angels, who were to be employed in the resurrection and ascension of Christ, were doubtless acquainted with this glorious event before hand; every one of those holy ones had their orders to be ready at the proper post for these transactions; for his rising from the dead, and his glorious entrance, as the Son of God, into his heavenly kingdom; thousands of angels were present there; *Psalm* lxviii. 17, 18. *The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels. The Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive,* &c.

9. Therefore was our Lord Jesus Christ represented to the apostle John as *a Lamb slain in the midst of the throne,* after his resurrection, and his entrance into glory in heaven; *Rev.* v. 6. that there might be an everlasting emblem, and monument, or memorial of the Lamb slain before the face of God, for all the blessed designs which God had in his view for the salvation of his people, through all the ages of mankind, ever since sin entered into the world, even to the end of time, and the consummation of all things: That by this vision there might be before the eyes of God a perpetual appearance of this foundation of our pardon of sin, the justification of our persons through the blood of Christ, and our acceptance with God in the heavenly world. And who can tell, or who can conceive, how many and how various were the blessed and glorious ends that God designed, and actually attained, by this representation?

DISCOURSE VI.

THE EARLY APPOINTMENT OF THE ATONEMENT OF CHRIST MANIFESTED.

REV. xiii. 8. AND v. 6.

OF THE LAMB SLAIN FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD. IN MIDST OF THE THRONE —STOOD A LAMB AS IT HAD BEEN SLAIN.

THE SECOND PART.

THUS far have we considered what are the transactions of God, in which he might have a regard to the sacrifice of Christ, represented so early as before the foundation of the world. In the next place, I proceed to consider what divine lessons of instruction, or consolation, may be derived from this vision of the *Lamb, as it had been slain*, appearing *in the midst of the throne;* Rev. xiii. 6. And among these we may number such as follow:

1. There is hereby an information given to the inhabitants of the heavenly world, that Jesus, the Son of God, who was made man, has redeemed many from among the children of men to be a praise unto him, and his glory, in all ages to come. There is an enquiry, Rev. vii. 13. *What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?* To this we answer, as in that text, verse 14. *These are they which came out of great tribulation.* Or we may give the same answer as Zeba and Zalmunna answered to Gideon, when they were asked, Judges viii. 18, 19. *What manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor?* And they answered, *As thou art, so were they; each one resembled the children of a king. And he said, they were my brethren, even the sons of my mother.* Each of them are the brethren of our Lord Jesus Christ, born of women, and exposed to *great tribulations*; but *they have all washed their robes, and made them white, in the blood of the Lamb: And therefore they are like the angels of heaven, who stand round the throne,* in the glorious services for which they are prepared, in the court of our blessed Redeemer, each of them the image of the first-born Son of God, and reconciled to God the Father by his blood, and shall dwell there for ever with him. A glorious Reconciler, and a divine atonement, and happy souls who are partakers of it!

2. The Lamb, as it had been slain, appears there as a divine Mediator, and is a memorial of the everlasting virtue, and constant efficacy, of the atoning sacrifice of Christ; which was typified of old by the constant sacrifices morning and evening: The priests on earth stood daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices; which could never effectually take away sin: *But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God——For by one offering he has for ever perfected them that are sanctified;* Heb. x. 12, 14. These repeated sacrifices were designed as a type to remove the continual guilt of returning sins amongst the saints; morning sins and evening sins, sins in the beginning of life, sins in the middle

state of life, and sins of old age; sins of public life, and private sins, known and unknown, secret and public. The priests were daily employed in continuing these typical sacrifices, through all the Levitical dispensation. And let it be observed, *Acts* iii. 1. this was called the hour of prayer; and that the people were appointed to offer up their prayers and praises unto God at these times of the morning and evening sacrifice, as the everlasting means of the acceptance of our morning and evening worship before God, making all our services acceptable to the great and blessed God in heaven hereby. Therefore, when we come to lift up our morning worship, or our evening addresses, to the throne, let us remember that Jesus, the Lamb who was slain, is there for ever, making this new and living way to the throne plain, and keeping it always open by the virtue of his sacrifice. Let not a morning or evening pass, without an address to heaven in this blood.

3. This gives sufficient and perpetual notice of the everlasting intercession which Christ makes for the saints, *Heb.* vii. 25. And therefore he is represented as *able to save to the uttermost all those that come unto God by him.* There is no need of other high-priests to offer up daily sacrifices, since the one sacrifice of Jesus, the great High-priest, in the constant emblem of it, abides here before the face of God for ever. John i. 29. 1 John i. 7. *Behold the Lamb of God, who, by his blood, cleanseth us from all sin.* Isaiah i. 18. *Though our sins may be as scarlet,* they shall all be washed away; and our garments be as *white as snow,* or made white *as wool,* and fit to appear before God continually, without blemishes and defilement, through this abounding fountain, which may be said to flow for ever from the wounds of Jesus Christ, as a sacrifice; since it is in and by this blood our High-priest may be supposed for ever to plead with the Father for our pardon and acceptance: For the intercession of Christ is scarcely revealed unto us, as carried on by the actual voice or language of Jesus, the Son of God, in heaven; but perhaps it rather means the everlasting virtue and efficacy of his sacrifice, as his blood, which has a voice in it, even as *a fountain, always open* and flowing in the sight of God for the forgiveness of sins, *Zech.* xiii. 1. for all the true Israel of God: And in this sense, the blood of Jesus, as is elsewhere said concerning *the blood of Abel,* has a voice in it, and pleads for ever for *better things than the blood of Abel did;* Heb. xii. 24. Glory be to God for providing this everlasting sacrifice, and for revealing such a vision in the midst of the throne, for our constant contemplation.

4. This vision appears on the throne as an everlasting encouragement for the vilest and most guilty sinners of all ages to trust in the sacrifice of the Lamb that was slain. When we remember the *scarlet* and *crimson* sins of David, Solomon, and Manasseh, and of the Corinthians, which are reckoned up, 1 *Cor.* vi. 10, 11. the saints on earth may say, and such were we, drenched all over and defiled with iniquities, whose evil thoughts, evil words, and evil actions, are without bounds, and without number; but they are all washed away in this divine laver, with all the infinite evil and guilt of them, against the Majesty and the grace of God; for the virtue and the dignity of the united godhead, which dwells in the man Christ Jesus, runs through the whole of his sacrifice, and makes it of infinite and everlasting value; whereby sins of all manner of aggravations are removed from those that believe in Jesus, 1 *John* i. 7. *Matt.* xii. 31. No manner of crimes are sufficient to create despair, where this atonement is provided.

5. It may also be designed as an encouraging memorial to relieve old sinners under the

guilt of sins, of long continuance, and laden with many aggravations; for as the yearly sacrifice of atonement, whose blood the High-priest carried into the holy place, and appeared there before God, cancelled the guilt of all the nation for all the days of that year; so Christ, being entered into *the holy place made without hands*, and dwelling there for ever, with his own blood answers for the sins of those that believe in him, which they have been all their lives committing against God, if they are but deeply convinced of their long and repeated iniquities, and with humble faith fly to Jesus, the hope that is set before them.

Look up, therefore, look up, ye humble penitents, that have been guilty of many and repeated crimes, and are almost drowned in tears of repentance, and are ready to die under despair, because of your aggravated iniquities, look unto this blessed emblem on high, the Lamb, as it had been slain: This sacrifice gives foundation for hope, not only that we shall be cleansed from all our secret faults, which are more than we can think, or reckon up, but even from presumptuous sins, which are of the deepest dye. Mark iii. 28. *All manner of sins and blasphemies*, says our Saviour, *shall be forgiven unto men.* Look up to this blessed emblem, and you shall find this salvation complete and perfect, and your consciences pacified, under the agonies of your own guilty reflections, through the blood of Jesus, who died.

6. This emblem of a dying sacrifice is also a refuge, a support, and a hope for saints, under the continual workings of original sin, under their daily infirmities, under every new temptation, and the buffetings and charges of Satan, who is *the accuser of the brethren;* Rev. xii. 11. The armies of the saints have continually experienced the virtue of this sacrifice; for in all ages they cast down this accuser by the blood of the Lamb; and here is their great refuge, under all the violent and repeated suggestions and accusations of the great enemy of God and souls. Here is indeed a sweet pillow for the souls of those who have been guilty of long iniquities, to rest their penitent and pained consciences, by faith upon, in a dying hour; Heb. xiii. 8. *Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever:* And the virtue of his atonement always fresh in the eye of God.

Is there any poor soul here, whose conscience is buffeted and sorely tormented with hurrying temptations, and doubts whether their repeated sins shall be pardoned or no? Go into the secret chambers of retirement and repentance, whither the saints before you have gone, and sighed, and wept bitterly before God, and mourned over their sins before the throne. Ask christians of long experience, whence came all their peace, and their hopes of freedom, from the guilt of sin; and they will answer, with one voice, it is from the blood of the Lamb. It would overwhelm the conscience to have a full sight of these transgressions let in upon it, in all their terror and their dreadful condemnation, if they had not such a refuge as this to fly to. Oh blessed for ever be the name of Jesus, who has given us, in his word, such a sight, such a gracious vision of hope and comfort! And a blessed vision it is for the poor, humble sinner, to take a look at daily, with an eye of faith.

7. This vision is appointed as an evidence and monument of the church's safety and security, hope and confidence, even to the end of the world; though their circumstances be never so low, though they are never so much sinking under their fears, this is a good security of that promise, Matt. xvi. 28. *The gates of hell shall not prevail against the church's interest*, to bring it down to the ground; for the sacrifice of Christ is of everlast-

ing value, and has purchased the security of the church to the end of the world. Jesus is represented as standing in the midst of the throne, and before the eyes of God the Father; so that the church shall never be condemned, nor given up to destruction. All the living stones that God has designed to be brought into the building of the church, shall be brought into it in their several seasons: All the dead sinners that are made alive by the blood of Christ, and by the work of his Holy Spirit, shall be raised together in a glorious building, which God shall dwell in for ever: And when *the top-stone* is laid in heaven, the redeemed nations shall shout unto it, *Grace, grace;* Zech. iv. 7.

8. This vision may be esteemed also as a monumental emblem, that the followers of Christ, who shall fill heaven with inhabitants, are sinners redeemed from the earth: They are brought into heaven as ransomed by the blood of the Lamb, and as cleansed in this laver; they are not originally pure and holy in themselves, as the angels were, but they are guilty creatures, once shamefully defiled and corrupted, but rescued from hell and sin, and recovered from all their defilements and dangers by a blessed Redeemer. Such were some of you, all ye pardoned and sanctified souls; such were all of you, as related to the first Adam, sinful and miserable: but ye are redeemed and saved by the second. This thought should ever keep us humble and self-abased, that such worthless creatures as we are, are not banished for ever from the presence of God. This should ever put us in mind of our low estate, that we were once fallen creatures, and are raised by the sovereign and condescending grace of God in Christ Jesus; and it is in Christ alone that we stand. This should be a perpetual warning to each of us, not to indulge or endure the least defilement of sin; for sin is of so malignant a nature, that it will soon spread all over the soul, and taint it with guilt and shame, when once indulged. This is a lesson for redeemed creatures ever to remember, especially while we are within the reach of temptation, and should keep us ever watchful.

9. This vision may give the believers in Christ an everlasting assurance that they shall never be separated from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord: For he stands in the midst of the throne, and will keep his place there for ever and ever, *Rom.* viii. 34, 35. He stands there, if I may so speak, in his priestly garments, with the remembrance of his bloody sacrifice, before the throne of God, and is never out of his sight. Faith may triumph with holy confidence in this view. Who shall condemn us now, since Christ has died, and lives for ever, to maintain and testify this atonement, which he has made for our sins by his death, and his rising again? *He that was dead is alive, and lives for evermore.* Amen; Rev. i. 18. Who shall pretend, therefore, to separate us from the love of God, that is so secured to us in and by Jesus Christ? You see plainly, in the last verse of this chapter, faith defies all creatures whatsoever to make any division between God and the justified and holy soul, while Jesus appears there in the eternal remembrance of his atoning sacrifice, the poor creature here on earth may sometimes be overtaken with sin, through the power of corruption, and blush, and fear to think of appearing before a God of perfect holiness; but this vision of our Redeemer encourages his faith, restores his spirit, and supports his hope. And we observe it is placed in the last of the prophetic visions, even in the Revelations of St. John, that it may abide upon the soul, and live in the memory of saints, in this frail and imperfect state, where they are so often in danger of sinning against God.

Inferences or remarks drawn from these discourses.—Remark I. How large, how

excellent, and how glorious, is this salvation of Jesus Christ, *the Lamb of God*, slain to take away the sins of the world? And this may be made to appear in many particulars:

1. It is a salvation that reaches through all ages, from the beginning to the end of time, from the first sin of man, even to the end of all things: Those glories of the salvation of Jesus Christ are beyond the reach of our present conception, and beyond all the powers of number to reckon up, and the force of eloquence to display.

2. It reaches through all the tribes of mankind, through all countries and nations, through all families and persons, both Jew and gentile, to the ends of the earth. Our Saviour prophesies, *that if he be lifted up from the earth*, that is, crucified, and die as an atoning sacrifice, *he shall draw all men unto him;* John xii. 32. So in *Rev.* v. 10. and vii. 9. men of all nations, and of all languages, of all countries, and all ages, shall be found in this blessed number, who are redeemed by the blood of Christ, and join in the everlasting song of praise *to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever.*

3. This doctrine of the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world, reaches through all the transactions of God with the children of men. It begins as high as creation itself; thousands of mankind were at first created for this reason, that they might in time be joined to this blessed army, and rejoice and triumph in *the Lamb that was slain:* It reaches through all the redemption of Christ, for sinful men were redeemed by the blood of Christ for this very purpose: For this purpose they were called and converted from the wicked of the earth; and turned from sin to God, that they might for ever be made glorious in holiness. It is through this death of Christ, the Son of God, that they are all justified and brought into the divine favour: They are all sanctified by his Holy Spirit, under this influence, and adopted into the family of God, to become the younger brethren of Jesus, the first begotten of the Father. And when God fulfils this salvation in heaven, it will appear what multitudes of fallen ruined creatures are recovered and saved by this atonement of the Lamb.

4. I may add further, all the mercies and blessings that are bestowed upon men through time and eternity: I might add, whether these blessings are national or personal, yet our Lord Jesus Christ, in our nature, dying on the cross, has some hand, by the exuberant merit of his sacrifice, in procuring and accomplishing all these purposes: The grace of Christ, while we keep our eye on the united godhead, has some hand in all the temporal favours, and even the national mercies, even of those who refuse to receive the special and everlasting blessings of his grace; besides all the consolations and the joys which the saints are partakers of here on earth, from their first calling to their glorification, must have some regard to this great sacrifice, ever fresh in the eye of God.

5. This salvation spreads through and beyond all the sins that ever we committed, from the beginning of life to this day; and beyond even all the miseries that mankind ever sustained by their original fall and apostacy from God; had they all received this grace, it is enough to balance them all. In the dignity of the divine nature, united to the man Jesus, there is provision enough to answer for all this abounding iniquity, and price sufficient to buy all the blessings that God ever bestowed upon his fallen creature man, and sufficient pardon and happiness for all the sinners that are willing to submit to the grace of God, and receive these blessings in his own appointed way. It is only impenitence, and rejection of the gospel, hinders the universal effect of it. O amazing and blessed extent of this salvation!

6. I add, in the last place, the doctrine of the salvation of the Lamb of God, slain

from the beginning of the world, carries a glory through all the perfections and attributes of God himself, which might be discovered at large in a survey of the several glories of his nature, his justice and wisdom, his power and his truth, his grace and goodness, in the salvation of fallen men: there is never a perfection of God that is honoured, but it is in and by this blessed medium, the death and mediation of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.

Remark II. How necessary, how solid and important, is this doctrine of the salvation of Christ, by the atonement of the Lamb? It is not a mere matter of speculation, amusement, and discourse; but it is of infinite concernment to men to be acquainted with it, *John* xii. 27. For the purposes and designs of this hour, even of the atonement and death of Christ, the Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God, came into this world. This might be illustrated also in many particulars; as

1. God would not deal thus with his beloved Son Jesus Christ, to make him a bloody sacrifice for mean and ignoble purposes. This work of his death and atonement is by no means to be esteemed as a cipher among the works of divine grace, or as a mere object of speculation and amusement. The blessed God has too much love for his Son Jesus, his only begotten, and his first beloved, to make him merely the talk of his church, or the matter of entertainment for their meditation, or their discourse; there must be something substantial, holy, divine, and honourable, designed in and by the death of this Lamb of God, whose sacrifice, in the view of it, is represented as beginning before the foundation of the world.

2. God would not deal thus with the fallen and miserable race of mankind, to appoint such a sacrifice, which had little or no efficacy in it. Our Saviour himself tells us, *John* vi. 33, 35. That *he is the bread of life; and except we eat his flesh, and drink his blood*, except the fallen and perishing race of mankind apply themselves to this way of salvation by Jesus Christ, *they have no life in them;* that is, *there is no salvation appointed any other way;* Acts v. 12.

3. The blessed God would not deal thus with his chief favourites among mankind, even the wisest, the best, and the holiest of his creatures, to be a sacrifice merely to entertain their reasonings and their meditations; but it is designed as the food of their souls, as the life of their spirits, and their hope for eternity, *John* vi. 21.

4. Again, God would never have dealt thus with his chosen and favourite people, the Jews, through all their generations, to have fed them and pleased them only with types and figures, shadows and emblems, if they had no substantial blessings contained in them. There were indeed some happy uses appointed, concerning these types and shadows, in the national church of the Jews; but this was not the chief design of their institution, but it was to figure out and represent the solid blessings of the gospel, the spiritual and everlasting privileges which God designed for all his chosen and saved ones.

5. I might add, in the last place, God would not deal thus with his holy prophets of the Old Testament, and his apostles in the New, whether Jews or christians, to make them the ministers of a shewy and shadowy dispensation, which had no substantial and everlasting blessings belonging to it.

Remark III. What a divine and distinguishing blessing is it to us, in this age and this nation, that the doctrine of the pardon of sin, by the atoning blood of the Lamb, has been preached to us from our infancy, and yet continues to be preached to us by the ministers of the gospel? Oh! blessed be God, that we are not found in those popish nations,

where the priests would teach us to trust in masses and penances, in long and idle repetitions of formal prayers in Latin, and merits of the saints, and useless addresses to them, represented in figures of silver or gold, wood or stone, or brass, in order to reconcile us to God; in sprinklings with holy water, and other fooleries, instead of the only appointed sacrifice of the Son of God; whereby they make void the blessed gospel of Christ, and overwhelm it with their superstitious inventions: How sad a thing would it be for us, if we were left upon a dying pillow, and had no other hopes but these to rest our souls upon?

Here it may not be improper to give an answer to this objection: If this doctrine of the atoning blood of the Lamb that was slain, be so glorious in itself, and so needful to our salvation, how comes it to pass that our Saviour speaks so little of it in the whole of his ministry, while he was three years preaching among the towns of the Jews?

Answer. See a large and full answer to this objection in my sermon on the *Atonement of Christ;* and further answers are repeated in my treatise of *Orthodoxy and Charity united,* in the latter part of the *First Essay of the Substance and Matter of the Gospel.*

Another objection may be raised here: If this doctrine be so glorious, and so very needful, how comes it to pass that it is so much neglected among men that profess christianity, and that men who believe it are no more affected with it?

Answer 1. Though a thing be never so useful and necessary, yet the mere commonness of these things sometimes is an unhappy occasion of rendering them less regarded, and less attended to. These glories and wonders of the gospel of Christ have run over our thoughts and over our tongues so many thousand times, without that due solemnity as becomes them, and without those awful ideas which those things require, that our natures are not much moved by the importance of them. Though these truths are in themselves so divine, so awful and solemn, yet, alas! they are lost upon our passions, and they make no powerful impression there; they awaken no serious meditations, neither at the time present nor afterwards.

2. Mankind do not keep upon their minds a deep sense of sin; the impressions that the convincing Spirit sometimes makes, vanish away from their consciences, and the necessity and the glory of this way of salvation too soon vanishes off from our thoughts, because we are not rightly and steadily apprehensive what an infinite evil is contained in the nature of sin; and therefore the methods of pardoning mercy and forgiving grace lie with so little weight upon our spirits. The sacrifice of Christ, how exceeding precious soever it is to an awakened and convinced sinner, yet it little affects the meditations of those who have not a lively sense of sin maintained upon their spirits: When sin lies with a weight upon the soul, it awakens many a bitter sigh and groan; and a review of the method of atonement appointed by the great God, in the blood of Christ, renders the remembrance of it very pleasant and affecting. Let us therefore endeavour with all diligence to preserve a deep sense of the evil of sin, as committed against the infinite Majesty of heaven, always upon our consciences, that the blood of Jesus may be ever precious unto us: We soon forget the vile aggravations with which our sins are attended; and therefore the way of forgiveness makes so little impression upon our souls.

3. There are few christians who keep the love of Christ active and warm enough in their hearts, to give them any deep impressions of the invaluable price of his blood. It is true there are many thousands in our land and nation who love the Lord Jesus Christ sincerely, though they have not seen him; but still they are but few, in comparison of the

unknown multitudes who have heard of his name, and yet know him not, and love him not. O blessed Jesus, awaken these thousands of stupid sinners to see the wonders of thy love, the amazing condescension of thy death, and the glory of this thy salvation! This reconciliation to God by the blood of Christ is one of the chief glories for which the saints in heaven ever praise him, and ever love him: This is the matter of their divine songs, Worthy is the Lamb to receive glory and honour! because we were enslaved and captivated to sin and Satan, and *we are redeemed by his blood;* Rev. v. 6.

4. Another unhappy cause why these things make so slight an impression upon our spirits is, because the most of us are so busily and deeply engaged in the things of this present life; though all these things which affect our present passions are but shadows and trifles, in comparison with this glorious and divine doctrine; a glorious subject indeed, which should at all times awaken our warmest joy, and our loudest praises.

Remark IV. How divinely full of glory and pleasure shall that happy hour be, when all the millions of mankind, that have been redeemed by the blood of this Lamb of God, shall meet together and stand around him, with every tongue and every heart full of joy and praise! How astonishing will be the glory and the joy of that day, when all the saints shall join together in one common song of gratitude, and love, and everlasting thankfulness, to this Redeemer? With what unknown delight, and inexpressible satisfaction, shall all that are saved from the ruins of sin and hell address the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world, and rejoice in his presence?

Nor shall the angels be silent in this general and universal song of blessing and praise; for though they are not redeemed from sin and hell by the blood of the Lamb, yet they are represented in *Rev.* v. 11, 12, 13. as assisting the saints, the redeemed of the Lord, in their triumphs of universal joy: And when they shall all at once, who, in the several ages of the world, have been taught to receive the grace and salvation of this Redeemer, stand together, and praise the Father of all things, who has given their souls into the hands of his Son Jesus Christ, to redeem, sanctify, and save them; then God shall have fulfilled this blessed prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ, John xvii. 24. *Father, I will, that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.*

DISCOURSE VII.

GOD IN CHRIST IS THE SAVIOUR OF THE ENDS OF THE EARTH; OR, FAITH REPRESENTED IN ITS LOWEST DEGREES.

ISAIAH xlv. 22.

LOOK UNTO ME AND BE YE SAVED, ALL THE ENDS OF THE EARTH; FOR I AM GOD AND THERE IS NONE ELSE.

THE FIRST PART.

IF these words were not written in the Bible, and by that means grown old and familiar to us, but if they had come immediately into the midst of any assembly in Great-Britain, by a voice from heaven, how would they awaken our ears, and impress our souls! Surely every one amongst us, that sees himself in danger of perishing, would listen with eager attention to the word that calls and invites him to be saved. The British islands have been reckoned by the ancients to be the ends of the earth; and we, the inhabitants thereof should be strangely surprized and pleased at such language from the upper world.

Our thoughts would be crowded with hasty enquiries, "Whence is this blessed voice? Is it from heaven indeed? Who is it that invites perishing wretches to salvation? Am not I within the reach and compass of this call? Is it not I that am invited? And is not the blessing suited to my case and my danger? What must I do to partake of it? And what assurance can I have that it shall be conferred upon me."

Such enquiries as these should be raised in us at this time, if we do but pay as just a deference to the voice of God when he spoke of old by a prophet, as we would if he spake now by a sudden miracle: And though all these queries would be very hard to answer, if we had nothing else but this miraculous sound, yet as the words lie in the Old Testament, since we enjoy the New, it is much easier to obtain a satisfying answer to them. Let us then try to find out,

I. Who is the person that speaks.

II. Who are the persons spoken to.

III. What this salvation is.

IV. How we are to come by it.

V. What assurance we can have, that we shall possess it in the way proposed.

To answer these questions shall be the business of these discourses.

First, Let us find out who is the person that speaks.

He asserts his own divinity in the words of my text. *I am God and there is none else.* Whether the Divine Being speaks this in the person of the Father, or in the person of Jesus Christ the Son, is not of absolute necessity to be determined in this place.

Perhaps it could not be expounded under the Old Testament any otherwise than con-

cerning the great God, considered as the Father of all, the only true God, whose name is Jehovah, and who was then chiefly known to the Jews as the God of Israel. It is the God of the Jews calling the gentiles to partake of his salvation. He is their strength and their Saviour, and their righteousness is derived from him, as in the foregoing and following verses.

But when under the New Testament we explain these words, we must rather consider God in Christ reconciling the world of Jews and gentiles to himself: It is the same one godhead which dwells bodily in the man Christ Jesus; for the Father and the Son are not two Gods. It is God, the only true God, manifest in the flesh: It is Immanuel, or *God with us*, who speaks these words: It is Christ Jesus the Lord, who is one with the Father, and in whom *the fulness of the godhead dwells*, who calls the *ends of the earth to look unto him and be saved.* And there are some special reasons that incline me to suppose these words of the prophet should chiefly be applied in the New Testament to our Lord Jesus Christ, who makes this blessed offer of grace.

(1.) It is the same person to whom the salvation of Israel is ascribed, and who is called a *Saviour* so often in the context, *verse* 15, 17, 21. which is the very meaning of the name Jesus, and the frequent appellation of Christ in the New Testament, and his particular office is to be a Saviour, and to bring salvation.

(2.) It is he who is appointed to be the *righteousness and the strength* of his people. Verse 24, 25. *Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.—In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified.* Now this is the very name of the Messiah; Jer. xxiii. 6. *The Lord our righteousness:* And it is Christ who is made righteousness unto us; 1 *Cor.* i. 23. And by and in whom all the saints are to be justified in the language of the gospel. It is from him also that his people derive strength. St. Paul bids *Timothy be strong in the grace which is in Christ;* 2 Tim. ii. 1. The Ephesian converts must *be strong in the Lord;* Eph. vi. 10. And the apostle himself *could do all things through Christ, who strengthened him;* Phil. iv. 13. Now the New Testament (to which times the words of my text chiefly refer) does not usually represent God, under the idea of the Father, as the strength of believers, nor is he ever described there as their righteousness.

Again (3.) This is the person that brings salvation to *the ends of the earth,* which is the very character of the Messiah in the writings of the same prophet. Isaiah xlix. 6. *I will also give thee for a light to the gentiles* (says God the Father), *that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.*

(4.) I add further, that part of this context, even the very next words, are applied to our Lord Jesus Christ by St. Paul. The prophet saith, *I am the Lord, and there is none else;* verse 18. *Unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear;* verse 23. The apostle, citing the words of the prophet, speaks thus; Rom. xiv. 9, 10, 11. *Christ died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living:* All must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ: *For it is written, as I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.* Where the words Christ, Lord, and God, seem to be used promiscuously for the same person. Nor would the apostle's argument seem strong and cogent in that place, if the word God were applied only to the Father; for it is his design there to shew, that the advancement and glory of Christ was the aim and the effect of our Saviour's death and resur-

rection, that he might be Lord and *Judge of all*, and that every knee and tongue might own his lordship and sovereignty. The application of these words to Christ, is again evident in Phil. ii. 10, 11. *At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.* Though there the glory of the Father is expressed also.

(5.) The last reason why this text may be properly applied to Christ, is because many other expressions of the prophets, that plainly belong to the great God, the God of Israel, as coming to bring salvation to the gentiles, are plainly applied to Christ in the New Testament; Psalm cii. 22, 25. *When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord,* &c. *Of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth.* This is applied to Christ; Heb. i. 10. So Psalm xcvii. 1—7. *The Lord reigneth—let the multitude of isles be glad thereof: Worship him all ye gods.* Which is applied to Christ; *Heb.* i. 6. So *Isaiah* xxxv. 4, 5, 6. compared with *Mark* ix. 27. So *Isaiah* xl. 5. compared with *Matt.* iii. 3. So *Joel* v. 32. compared with *Rom.* x. 13. which would be too large now to rehearse.

It will be objected indeed, how can it be said, that Christ is God, and there is none else? Is not the Father God also? I answer, this does no more exclude the godhead of the Father, than our Saviour's own words, *John* xvii. 3. exclude his own divinity, where he calls the Father *the only true God.* I think it is sufficiently evident from many places of scripture, that the Father and the Son have an inconceivable communion, and that one and the same divine nature, which is in the Father, dwells in the Son: For since divine names and attributes, works and worship, are ascribed to both, therefore they must both be in some sense true God; and since there is but one true God, they must both have fellowship in the same godhead; or else the Son would be another God different from the Father, which the Bible neither knows nor allows.

These words, therefore, "I am God, and there is none else," if applied to Christ, mean no more than this: There is no other godhead but that which dwells in me; but that godhead in which I partake, by intimate communion or oneness with the Father. *I am in the Father, and the Father is in me;* John xiv. 10, 11. *In Christ dwells all the fulness of the godhead bodily;* Col. ii. 9. After all, if we should ascribe this speech entirely to God the Father, yet it must be confessed, as I hinted before, it is *God in Christ, God as reconciling the world to himself* in and by Jesus Christ, and saving the gentiles as his people, with *an everlasting salvation;* so that Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour of men, cannot be left out of my text.

The *second* enquiry is this, who are the persons to whom this gracious invitation is made? The text tells us, that the call reaches to all the ends of the earth, which we are to understand in a literal or in a figurative sense.

I. In a literal sense, and thus it signifies the gentile nations, who dwell afar off from Judea, those that inhabit the distant corners of the world, and *the islands that are afar off*, that have not heard of the fame of the grace or glory of God. As *Isaiah* lxvi. 19. For the Jews fancied themselves to be placed in the middle of the earth, by the peculiar favour of God; and indeed they were so in one respect, for the land of Canaan is near the borders of Asia, where it joins to Africa, and not very far off from the limits of Europe; which three were the only known parts of the world in that day.

The British islands may, in a special manner, be included in this expression, for they were the very farthest parts of the earth that could be known in the age of Isaiah.

This voice of compassion is therefore eminently sent to us in England; the Lord says to every one of us, *Behold me, behold me, ye that were not called by my name;* Isaiah xlv. 1. *Look unto me from these isles afar off, ye Britons, look unto me from the ends of the earth, and be saved.* O Sirs, if you and I could but imagine that Jesus Christ calls us, as it were, by name, surely it would allure us to hearken to the voice of such divine compassion.

II. The words may be understood in a figurative sense, and so they may signify all those persons who are under the same sort of character and circumstance as the gentiles were in that age.

1. Ye that are in the ends of the earth, that are afar off from the church of God, his knowledge and his worship. Ye that are at the greatest distance from the true Jerusalem. Ye who are the vilest of sinners, utterly unholy, and without God in the world. Ye that have nothing of grace or religion in you, look unto Christ and be saved, for he came to save the sinners of the gentiles, and the vilest of mankind.

2. Ye that have not known the blessing of holy parents, but were bred like heathens, who know not God, and born in families that call not on his name: Ye that never were trained up in religious education, that were never brought near to God by a father that was in his covenant, or a mother that believed in his gospel: Ye that were never solemnly devoted to God, nor acknowledge any relation to him, he calls you this day to accept his salvation. Or,

3. Ye that have broke the bonds of a pious education, and ran away from God and his house, and his worship, as the gentiles had done from the religion and instructions of Noah their ancestor. Ye that have wandered afar off from your Father's house, even to *the ends of the earth*, and are perishing with the prodigal son, at a dreadful distance from God and heaven: Come, *look unto Christ and be saved.*

4. Ye that are mourning in darkness, as it were, at *the ends of the earth*, and on the very borders of hell, *without hope*, as the gentiles were; *Eph.* ii. 12. almost giving up all for lost, yielding to final despair, *look to Jesus the Saviour, lay hold on the hope that is set before you, and live.*

And while I am preaching in this place,* I may add also,

5. You that dwell in dark corners of this our land, far from any place of religious worship: Ye who live by the sides of the forest, or on bare and solitary commons, in a poor ignorant village, or in lonesome cottages, where letters and reading are not known, and a Bible is a strange thing, where books are seldom seen, and the word of God never sounds: Ye that have lived hitherto like wild heathens in the ends of the earth, if any such are present in this assembly, remember you are this day called, as it were, by the prophet from heaven, and by the word of the living God, from the lips of his ministers on earth, to look to God in Christ, as reconciling the world to himself; to look to Jesus the Saviour, *in whom all the fulness of the godhead dwells.*

The *third* enquiry proceeds thus: What is this salvation to which we are invited? It is the same salvation that Israel shall enjoy, the Israel of God, the people of his love: They shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation; *verse* 17. In general, it is a salvation from sin, and all the dismal consequences of it. This is the reason of the

* This was delivered in a village in the country.

name Jesus, or *the Saviour;* Matt. i. 21. *He shall save his people from their sins.* And it is the same Jesus, *who delivers us from the wrath to come;* 1 Thess. i. 10.

Particularly (1.) It is a salvation from the guilt of past sins, which exposes us to divine vengeance, and a restoration of the person to the present love and favour of God, to peace of conscience, and to the hope of eternal life. (2.) It is a salvation and a recovery from the power of sin to the power of holiness. It is a deliverance from vile affections and sinful practices to the practice and the love of all piety and goodness: It is a recovery of our nature from the lusts of the flesh, and the life of a brute, to the reasonable and becoming life of a man or an angel. It is a rescue of the soul from the tyranny of its own lusts, and the foul image of Satan, to a sweet and sacred liberty, to a religious self-government, and to the image of God. (3.) It is a deliverance from all the future punishments due to sin, from the everlasting misery of hell, together with the conveyance of a right and title to the everlasting happiness of heaven. It is a blessing that runs through this world and the world to come. It is a total and complete deliverance from all that you feel, and all that you fear. It is all-sufficient and eternal salvation.

Whatsoever your ruin, your distress, or your danger be, there is something in this salvation that is suited to relieve them all; there is relief and hope in Christ. Let us then awaken all the powers within us to attend to the invitations of divine mercy. Are we blind and ignorant of God, and heaven, and divine things? *Christ is the light of this lower world;* John i. 9. *He has compassion on them that are ignorant and out of the way;* Heb. v. 2. Are we foolish? *He is made of God wisdom to us;* 1 Cor. i. 30. Are we unclean and defiled with many iniquities? *The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin;* 1 John i. 7. Are we guilty before God? *He is our propitiation and atonement;* Rom. iii. 25. and *the Lord our righteousness;* Jer. xxiii. 6. Have we lost the divine favour? *He is the only Mediator betwixt God and man;* 1 Tim. ii. 5. *And the great Reconciler to make our peace;* Eph. ii. 15. Are we unholy? *He can change our natures, and sanctify our souls;* Heb. ii. 11. Are we hard-hearted and impenitent, so that we cannot mourn for our sins as we would do? *He is exalted to bestow repentance,* as well as *forgiveness;* Acts v. 31. Are we weak, and unable to resist temptation, or to perform our duty? *He is our strength;* Isaiah xlv. 24. Are we sick and dying? *He is our physician;* Matt. ix. 12. Are we dead in trespasses and sins? He can quicken us to a divine life, and make us live to God; for the living Spirit is with him. Christ himself *is our life;* and though the body of the saint must die, yet he shall raise it again to life everlasting; *John* v. 21, 26, 29.

Surely if we are awake, and in our right senses, there is not a soul of us in this assembly, but must feel itself under some of these unhappy circumstances. Come then, ye sinful and distressed souls, ye helpless creatures, ye perishing, dying wretches of every kind: Come, let me lead you to this heavenly Saviour; and may my own soul join with yours to partake of this full, this all-sufficient salvation. Blessed Redeemer, make us all willing to be saved, and let us seek our help from thy hands!

I go on now to the *fourth* enquiry: And that is, what must we do, in order to be partakers of this blessing? The words of the invitation are, look unto me. Now when persons in distress are called to look to any one for help, it implies to trust in him, to depend upon him, to seek help from his power and goodness. See the history of *the cripple, who seeing Peter and John going into the temple, asked an alms; and they said, look on us: Upon which he gave heed to them, expecting to receive something of them;*

Acts iii. 4, 5. So looking unto God signifies dependance on him, and expectation of mercy from him. *We know not what to do,* saith Jehoshaphat; 2 Chron. xx. 12. *but our eyes are upon thee.* So Psalm xxiv. 5. *They looked unto him and were lightened.* When there was universal distress round about, saith the prophet, Micah vii. 7. *I will look unto the Lord, I will wait for the God of my salvation.*

It is evident from the sacred, as well as the common use of this word, that it signifies the same as believing or trusting in Christ in the New Testament, which is the appointed means of our obtaining a share in this salvation. Acts xvi. 31. *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.* Sinners of the gentiles are required in my text to look to him. It is foretold by the same prophet, that *to him shall the gentiles seek;* Isaiah xi. 10. Which is cited and interpreted by St. Paul, Rom. xv. 12. *In him shall the gentiles trust.*

The soul, then, that is so far sensible of its past iniquities, its guilt and danger of hell, and that feels so much of its inward sinful nature, appetites, and passions, as to know its own inability to procure pardon of God for sins past, or to make itself holy for time to come, and sees also in Christ such a glorious all-sufficiency of help and relief, and upon this account commits itself by prayer and humble trust, or dependance, into the hands of Jesus Christ, as an all-sufficient Saviour, sincerely and earnestly desirous of his complete salvation in all the parts of it, the holiness and the happiness; this soul is a believer in Christ; this soul has looked to Christ, in the sense of my text, and shall certainly be saved. Because the duty of faith, trusting or believing, is so necessary to salvation, therefore it has pleased God in his word to render the notion of it plain and easy, by many metaphors and figures of speech, to accommodate the capacities and understandings of the meanest. And these are borrowed also from the most useful and active powers of nature, and the most common actions of life.

When the metaphor is taken from the feet, believing is called a *coming to Christ;* Matt. xi. 28. *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;* John vi. 37. *Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.* In another place it is described by *fleeing for refuge;* Heb. vi. 18. which is a figure borrowed from the feet also; but including danger, fear, and speed. When it is borrowed from the hands, it is called receiving of Christ; John i. 12. *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.* And *Heb.* vi. 18. It is a laying hold on the hope set before us. Sometimes the metaphor is taken from the tongue, and then faith is described by calling on Christ; Rom. x. 11, 12, 13. *Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. He that believeth on him shall not be ashamed; for the same Lord over all, is rich unto all that call upon him.*

In my text, the figure of speech is taken from the eyes; and the direction is, look unto me and be saved. There is something in this way of speaking, that more exactly suits the words faith and believing: for as they imply both a belief of the all-sufficiency of Christ to save, and a trusting him for this salvation, so looking implies that the poor dying creature has seen the all-sufficiency that is in Christ, and thence is encouraged to hope and expect help from him. It is such a look of hope and dependance as a helpless creature, just dying of the pestilence, or a mortal stab, would express toward some angel-physician that was coming to him with a vital and all-healing balm: Such a look as a condemned criminal, at the place of execution, would cast toward some swift messenger afar off, who has a pardon in his hand: Or such a look as a child, just ready to

be slaughtered by a spiteful enemy, would express towards his father, well armed, and hasting to his deliverance. We may suppose the saving act of faith in this place to be described by the word looking, for these reasons.

I. Because the persons who are called, are in the ends of the earth: And thus the propriety of expression is preserved, and the metaphor appears more beautiful. Those who are so far off from Christ might complain, "We are feeble dying creatures, we cannot come to him, as with our feet, nor lay hold of him as with our hands; but we can look toward him, though we are in the ends of the earth." As Jonah did when in the depths of the sea; Jonah ii. 4. *I am cast out of thy sight, yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.* Now the temple was a type of the human nature of Christ, in which God was pleased to dwell; and the Jews in their prayers, even from the ends of the earth, and in heathen lands, turned their eyes towards this temple in humble hope of acceptance; 1 *Kings* viii. 29, 35, &c. So may the poor perishing sinner say, "Though I am far from God and holiness, and all hope in myself, or in any creatures that are near me, yet I am within reach of the call of Christ; I hear the voice of his inviting grace; I will look towards him as my only hope; I will keep my eyes upon him and trust in him; I will by him draw near to God; and my soul shall live."

II. Believing in Christ may be described in this place, by looking to him to express the lowest and the weakest degree of faith, for the encouragement of poor convinced trembling sinners. When persons are awakened to a lively apprehension of their guilt, and a quick sense of their danger, and see themselves every moment liable to perish under the wrath of an offended God, and at the same time feel their own utter inability to save themselves, it is proper that the act of faith whereby we are saved should be expressed in the easiest manner, that may allure them toward Christ, the only Saviour, and may encourage them to hope. When they are, as it were, at the ends of the earth, at a wide distance from God and Christ, they may look towards him, and send a wish of desire and dependance that way; like dying drowning sailors in a storm, that look towards the shore, to see if there be any hope: And such a look as this is ordained of God, to derive all salvation from so almighty and complete a Saviour as Jesus Christ is: For it contains in it the whole nature of saving faith, as the flower and the fruit are contained in a little green bud, though the several parts and the leaves of them are not yet unfolded, nor appear to sight.

Such a look of a convinced sinner to Christ implies in it a distressing sense of his sin and present danger, a belief that there is help for him in Christ, and an aversion of the eye from every thing else; a renouncing all other dependancies, an earnest readiness and desire to partake of this salvation, such as Christ offers it; that is, to make him holy as well as happy: And it includes also thus much of trust or confidence, that if the soul has any hope at all of its own salvation, Christ is the only ground of this hope. There is and will be some sort of expectation of relief from the hand to which we look, when we see ourselves perishing.

III. Looking to Christ for salvation, is a word that shews how little hand we have in our own deliverance from sin and death. *Israel has destroyed himself, but in God alone is his help;* Hosea xiii. 9. It is not possible that our looking should effect our salvation of itself, or do any thing toward it any other way, than as it is, dependance on another to save us.

Faith itself is that grace that has the least shew of self-activity, self-sufficiency, or

self-honour in it; *Rom.* iv. 16. Therefore our salvation is ordained to be of faith, *that it might be of grace.* It is the law or constitution of faith, as the means of our salvation, that it must *exclude all boasting:* Rom. iii. 27. That all that are saved might *glory only in the Lord;* 1 Cor. i. 31. Now when faith itself is expressed in so low and feeble exercise of it as looking unto Christ, it does in a most emphatical manner exclude every thing of self; it utterly forbids all boasting, and renders all the honour to Christ alone. How can a dying wretch pretend to any glory or merit in his own salvation, who only looked and was saved?

IV. There is in this way of expression a natural and easy reference to the command of looking to the brazen serpent, which was a type of Christ, and which was to confer health and life on the wounded and dying Israelites, by their looking up to it in the wilderness. See John iii. 14, 15. *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.* Compared with Numb. xxi. 8. *The Lord said unto Moses, make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.* Happy people, for whom so divine a remedy was provided against a national mischief! So sovereign an antidote against spreading and mortal poison! Those that were stung and perishing, though they were at the utmost limits of the camp, might, as it were, from the borders of the wilderness, look up to the brazen remedy, and find health and life: From the ends of the land they looked and were saved.

Physicians were useless in that day, and all medicines insignificant. The swift and fiery poison wrought powerfully in them that were bitten, and they were quickly brought to the borders of the grave. But before their eyes were closed in death, if they could but cast a look towards the appointed signal, the divine medium of salvation, behold they are miraculously healed, and live! And which of all the sons or daughters of Israel could boast of any thing of his own in this wonderous deliverance, when on the very confines of life and the brink of the grave they were healed by a look to the brazen image of a serpent? Such is the perishing sinner, casting an eye toward Christ for salvation!

But some poor trembling sinner will be ready to say, "Surely this is so little and so low an act of faith, that I am ready to question whether this can save me or no: How shall I know whether my looking to Christ is of that kind as shall be effectual to my salvation?

Now in answer to such an enquiry, let the fearful soul remember what I have said before under the second particular, concerning the several acts of the soul that are secretly included in this looking to Jesus; and ask itself whether it has put forth these acts or no? Besides this, I would mention also these two properties of saving faith, as it is described by looking.

1. It must be such a look as immediately affects the heart with love and sorrow; sorrow for our own sins, and love to Christ our Saviour. If we have ever seen him with sincere delight as a Saviour from sin, we shall mourn heartily that ever we were sinners. We cannot but repent for sin, while we believe or hope for the forgiveness of it through such condescending grace. And we cannot but love so compassionate and almighty a Friend, that has delivered us from eternal destruction. Having seen Christ, we are weaned from sin, and we love the Lord. Mary Magdalene, that remarkable sinner,

lying at the foot of Christ, wept much and *loved much;* Luke vii. 38, 47. You have never seen Christ, as your Saviour, if your sins are not the objects of your shame and sorrow; or if Jesus be not the object of your desire and love.

2. It must be such a look as changes the soul and temper into another image, even the image of Christ. 2 Cor. iii. 18. *We, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory.* In the glass of the gospel beholding the glorious holiness of our Lord Jesus Christ, our very tempers are changed into his holy likeness, from one degree of grace to another, till it advance to complete glory; and then we shall be made more perfectly like him by seeing him as he is, or face to face; 1 *John* iii. 2. There will be a shine of holiness on our conversation in this world, as reflected from the glory and holiness of Christ, whom we have seen, even as the face of Moses shone when he had *seen God;* Exodus xxxiv. 29, 30. That is, when he had seen the Son of God conversing with him in a visible glory.

A saving look of faith to our Lord Jesus Christ, will happily influence all the powers of nature, and all the actions of life. This is seldom done indeed at once, but by slow degrees. The longer we behold him, and the oftener we look to him, the more we shall grow like him. We must look to Jesus as our example, as well as *the author and finisher of our faith;* that we may lay aside the sin that *so easily besets us, and run with patience the race* of holiness *that is set before us;* Heb. xii. 1, 2. In vain do we pretend to have seen Christ, if we do not find ourselves at all beginning to become new creatures.

Thus I have finished my answer to the fourth enquiry; *viz.* How we are to come by this salvation; and why the act of faith is expressed by looking to Christ.

DISCOURSE VIII.

GOD IN CHRIST IS THE SAVIOUR OF THE ENDS OF THE EARTH: OR, FAITH REPRESENTED IN ITS LOWEST DEGREES.

ISAIAH xlv. 22.

LOOK UNTO ME AND BE YE SAVED, ALL THE ENDS OF THE EARTH; FOR I AM GOD; AND THERE IS NONE ELSE.

THE SECOND PART.

THIS is an invitation of surprising and sovereign mercy to creatures in the utmost distress and misery. It is the great and blessed God himself, in the person of Jesus Christ, calling the gentile world to salvation. It is God in Christ inviting sinners from the ends of the earth, and the borders of hell, to partake of heaven and happiness. It is Immanuel, God with us, who calls us to look unto him and be saved. If we are sensible of our own misery; if we are weary of sin, and would be secured from the wrath to come, let us look to him as a Saviour, with an eye of faith and holy dependance. This was the subject of the former discourse.

Let us now go on to the last question, and learn, what assurance we can have from the text, that we shall possess this salvation in the way proposed; or that faith in God our Saviour shall be attended with such success.

The reason is given by the prophet in almighty and convincing language; *For I am God, and there is none else.* This sentence has two distinct parts in it, and each of them carries strong reasons for the support of our faith, and the encouragement of our hope. The first part is the assertion of his own godhead. *I am God;* which carries in it these two supports or assurances:

1. *I am God;* therefore I am all-sufficient to save; and therefore, ye dying sinners, look unto me, and be saved. What is there that the most wretched of creatures can stand in need of, but there is a supply to be found among the treasures of a God? When a God undertakes to be a Saviour, the creature cannot perish. There is light and wisdom enough in him to make the fool wise for ever, and to scatter all our darkness: There is power enough in God, to make the weakest soul strong in grace, and active in every duty: There is love enough in him, to melt the most stubborn heart, and change an old enemy into an humble and willing subject. Ye may be assured of this salvation if ye look to Jesus, who is God, and therefore *mighty to save;* Isaiah lxiii. 1. There is an all-sufficiency in his blood and righteousness to atone for infinite transgressions, and to procure the everlasting favour of God: For this High-priest or Mediator himself is one with God, he is God, and his sacrifice on earth, and his intercession in heaven, are all over dignified with godhead, and thereby become almighty for salvation.

2. *I am God;* and therefore have a right to prescribe the means of obtaining my

salvation. Look therefore unto me, ye sinners, and be saved. I will give it to every one that looks; *he that believes on me shall be saved* from sin and death; *Mark* xvi. 16. *John* iii. 15, 16. God is rich in grace; and if he will manifest the glory and freedom of it in the grant of his new covenant, and will promise salvation to faith, and not insist upon that personal perfect obedience which once was required, let the thankful sinner rejoice, and submit, and give God the honour of his abounding mercy. Let him pursue the highest measures of holiness, under the melting influences of gratitude, and the constraining power of divine love. This is naturally implied in the first part of the words, *I am God.* But when he adds this glorious clause, *and there is none else*, he seems, in the second part of this sentence, to intimate these three things further to us:

1. There is none that can save besides me. The salvation of a sinner from the ends of the earth, from the borders of hell, is too great a work for any being that is less than God. What mere creature has worth enough to make compensation to the great God for the sins of men? Or what created power has influence enough to persuade God to be reconciled? Is there knowledge enough in a mere fellow-creature, intimately to acquaint himself with all the thoughts and wants of a perishing sinner? Is there power enough to new-mould his nature? To strike divine light into his conscience? To bend his stubborn will, and subdue all his powers to the obedience of the gospel? Has any mere creature power sufficient to change a dead sinner into a living saint? To secure him through every temptation? To fit him for the society of God and angels? And to bring him through death to eternal glory? All this must be done if a sinner be saved.

2. These words also imply, there is none but God who has a right to prescribe the means of our salvation. If he says to sinners, *look, and be saved;* who shall dare forbid the blessing, or appoint a different way to obtain it? If the Lord of heaven has said to poor perishing creatures on earth, ye shall be saved if ye believe: Shall the Jew dare to impose circumcision as necessary to salvation? Or the papists command penances or pilgrimages? Or shall the conceited Pharisee require a perfection of holiness, and a righteousness made up of the works of the law, in order to obtain eternal life? *The righteousness of the law saith, Do this and live:* But *the righteousness of faith says, Believe and be saved:* Rom. x. 5, 6, 9. It is granted, that this saving faith must be a vital principle in the soul, that manifests itself in repentance, and endeavours after universal holiness; for a dead faith cannot save: But it is not our holiness that can provide acceptance with an offended God; it is faith in the sacrifice and righteousness of the Redeemer, that is the means appointed for this end. The great God has appointed it, and who shall dare to forbid? his authority is sovereign, and his appointment a sufficient warrant for our hope.

3. *I am God, and there is none else*, includes thus much also for the comfort and assurance of the believing sinner; that there is none can prevent your salvation, if you comply with the gracious proposals. Who shall condemn if God will justify? *Rom.* viii. 33, 34. Who can *pluck us out of the hand of Christ, or separate us from his love?* John x. 28. Who shall destroy, if God will save? It is his property, and his divine prerogative, to *kill and to make alive, to save and to destroy;* Deut. xxxii. 39, 43. *See now, that I, even I am he; and there is no God with me; I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal; neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. Rejoice* therefore, *O ye nations*, ye gentiles together *with his people Israel; for he will render vengeance to his*

adversaries, and be merciful to his land; Isaiah xliii. 11, 13. *I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no Saviour. I will work; and who shall let it?*

Thus it appears, that there is abundant ground from the words of my text, for a poor perishing sinner to raise his hope to assurance that he shall be saved, if he does but sincerely answer this gracious invitation from heaven, and trust in God, as he is revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ, for salvation, according to that description of true faith which is given us in the word of God. All the improvements I shall make of this discourse at present, shall be contained in these four reflections:

I. We may learn from this scripture, how extensive and glorious is the salvation of Christ? How answerable is it in every respect to the weaknesses and the wants, to the miseries, dangers, and fears, of a convinced and awakened sinner; It reaches to those who are perishing in the ends of the earth. Let us survey them a little more particularly.

1. Is our guilt and distress exceeding great and dreadful? Behold here a salvation of rich fulness and divine all-sufficiency; for it is a God that provides it. The riches of grace, the depths of wisdom, and the efforts of almighty power are employed in this blessed work; and the mercy is expressed in the manner of a speaking God: He who said, *Let there be light, and there was light*, says also, *look and be saved:* And the sinner looks, and receives salvation. It is a God who *commands deliverances for Jacob, and salvation for his people;* Psalm xliv. 4.

2. Are our enemies great and mighty? Are the flesh, and the world, and the powers of hell engaged against the safety of our souls? yet our salvation is perfectly and eternally secure; for he that saves us is God: No creature can divest us of it, and *there is no other God besides him. Neither height, nor depth, nor principalities, nor powers—nor life nor death, nor any creature, shall separate us from the love of God, in Christ Jesus, our Lord;* Rom. viii. 38, 39.

3. Are we at such a dreadful distance from God, that we seem to be on the utmost verge of all hope, at the ends of life and this world, at the borders of hell and despair? Yet we are within the reach of the call of mercy, within the sound of the voice of Christ, and his extensive grace. *Look from the ends of the earth, and be saved.*

4. Are we poor impotent creatures, that can do nothing to make satisfaction to God for our sins, and little or nothing towards the restoring our souls to the likeness of God, and the recovery of holiness? Do we stand in need of such a Saviour, that must work all our works for us, and in us? Behold such a one in my text: He requires of you but to look to him, and trust in him, in the manner I have described, and the salvation is free and sure. Christ himself will bestow it on us. There are some poor, melancholy, desponding creatures, who are even almost overwhelmed with a sense of their guilt, and of the power of sin in them, and are just giving up all hope, who have need to have the riches and amazing condescensions of grace to be set before them, in such a manner as this. And blessed be God, that his gospel contains in it such abounding mercy to creatures so miserable. We may therefore cry out with joy and thankfulness, and holy wonder; O the fulness and sufficiency of this salvation! It is God who provides it, who knows, and can supply all the vast variety of our wants! O the wide extent of it! It reaches to all nations, to all characters of persons, even to the ends of the earth. O the rich freedom of this grace, that requires us to look, and be saved! O what free and full, what large and extensive, what rich and sovereign salvation!

II. What a blessed security of this salvation is given to all those who comply with the invitation of this grace! It is as safe as it is extensive. No creature can take away what a God resolves to bestow. No finite being can prevent what an infinite Being resolves to do. If he that is God will save, none else can destroy, or frustrate the designed salvation? Who shall forbid the blessing that the almighty Saviour will confer on those who look to him from the ends of the earth? The enemy, even the most malicious and powerful enemy, whose name is Abaddon, or the destroyer, is but a creature; but the friend, the mighty and merciful friend, whose name is Jesus, or the Saviour, is God, even Immanuel, God with us. When he stands upon the throne of his mercy, and cries out to perishing sinners, *look to me from the ends of the earth, and be saved;* not all the powers of hell shall be able to destroy the sinners that look to him, and accept of his salvation. What a glorious relief is found in my text against all temptations to despondency? Your Saviour is God, and there is none besides him.

III. How much do those sinners deserve to perish for ever, who will not be saved upon such gracious terms? In vain do you turn your eyes around you, and look to one creature, and seek to another for help; your ruin is too great, and your misery too deep and dismal, for any power but that of God, to raise and recover you. If they who refused to hear the voice of Moses, who spake from earth, died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment shall ye be thought worthy, *who refuse to hearken to the voice of God speaking from heaven?* Heb. x. 28, 29. Can you ever imagine it possible that you should *escape* the divine vengeance, *who neglect so great*, so divine a *salvation.*

Consider, ye sinners, that are this day under the call of grace, though now you seem to be as it were at the ends of the earth, afar off from God and Christ, from all that is holy, and all that is happy, yet you are not utterly abandoned to destruction, while the voice of mercy sounds in your ears. But take heed that ye hearken while ye are called to-day, lest ye perish before the morrow come. Remember this, that the silver trumpet of mercy will not always sound: Christ Jesus will not always say, look unto me, and be saved. Ye are now upon the confines of hell; if once death open its dark gates, and hell has shut her mouth upon you, you will then be far out of the sight of Jesus the Saviour, and beyond the call of his mercy for ever.

Let me turn my voice now for a few minutes to the gospel Israel, to the children of the kingdom. While I have been inviting the ends of the earth to be saved, and have been calling sinners afar off from God and his church to receive Jesus Christ and his salvation, is there any dispensation for you to neglect it, who dwell in the midst of the visible church? You were born of holy parents, who have lived in religious families, and are by this means brought near to the kingdom of heaven? Are you ready to flatter yourselves that you are out of danger of perishing? Have a care of vain presumption, and foolish feeble hopes. The wounded Israelites, who lay just under the brazen serpent of old, might die and perish there in their own folly, if they refused to look up to the appointed remedy; while some from the distant borders of the camp looked and were saved: But such obstinate wretches must be unpitied in death.

Attend then, ye sinners in Zion, and hearken to the voice of God the Saviour. Christ has been brought near to you in his gospel, his promises, and his holy ordinances; you have read of him in his word, you have heard him speak by his ministers, and you have learned much of him from the instructions of your pious parents: Ye have begun to see something of him in his glory and grace; and will you now turn your eyes away from

him? Will you look upon the vanities of the present evil world, and fix the eye of your souls, your desires, hopes, and wishes, upon trifles and impertinence, and neglect the offer of heavenly treasures? Have you seen and heard so much of Christ already, that you have grown weary of him? Are the Lord and his salvation grown cheap and common things to you, of little value, not worth a look? Will you who are near to the kingdom of heaven, refuse to enter in, and let those that come from the ends of the earth obtain the inheritance, and seize the happiness before you? Oh! how aggravated will your condemnation be? How dreadful the agonies of your torment, to see perishing sinners come from distant regions, from the east and the west, from poor wicked families, and houses of iniquity, and receive the salvation of Christ! while you are *cast out into outer darkness? There shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth;* Matt. viii. 11, 12.

IV. The last use I shall make of this discourse, is to take a short survey of that salvation, of the happiness and the holiness thereof, that is derived to a soul by a sincere look of faith to Jesus the Saviour. Oh! what a blessed change is made by our looking to Christ! A change, I say, in the very eye-sight of our souls, and in our view and survey of all things round about us, so far as we have any concern in them! What a blessed change in our judgment and esteem of them! We look upon things with another eye than before, and things put on a new face. Faith looking to Christ for salvation, sets all things in a different light before the eyes of the soul, and gives quite another view of them. It is like some heavenly glass applied to the organ of sense, that not only assists and improves our sight, but represents every thing to us in a divine light, even such as they appear to the blessed spirits above.

1. It alters the view and appearance of all the great and gay things of this life. All the treasures, and pomp, and entertainments of this world, were once the most tempting objects we could look upon; but now we look on the world, with all the gayest and the richest scenes of it, as a little mean and despicable thing; for we have seen Christ and heaven; and when the world begins to flatter us again, and to look great and tempting in our eyes, let us look again to Jesus and his salvation; that the world may lose its splendour and allurements.

2. Once a poor christian in a cottage, or in a vile raiment, was contemptible in our sight, now we look on the saints, even in the meanest circumstance, as the excellent of the earth; for they are heirs of heaven, they are like to Christ, and formed after the blessed image of him, whom we have seen with an eye of faith and love. Holy Saviour, and holy saints! They, *the excellent of the earth*, and he, the ornament of heaven.

3. The Bible heretofore we looked on but little better than a common book; or perhaps, it was our aversion. The New Testament gave us no pleasure. The true glories of it were hidden from us. The gospel was a *hidden* gospel; but now we look upon it as our most valuable treasure and portion; and we often look into it; for we find Jesus Christ there, with all his salvation. Every part of the Bible carries quite another aspect than once it did. We look upon the promises as an inventory of our inheritance; and we read those words, *All things are yours*, with a relish of unknown delight, because of our own interest in them: And as they are repeated twice, to confirm our faith, so we can read them often, and dwell upon them with pleasure. *All are yours; for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's;* 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23. Then by virtue of this promise we can look to the heavens and the earth; to the sun, moon, and stars; to

Paul, Apollos, and Cephas; to ministers, and to angels; to this world and the other; to *life and death*, to *things present and to come;* with an humble and pleasurable belief of our interest in them, so far as we have need of them to make us holy or happy.

And as we look on the *promises* of the Bible with another eye than formerly, so we behold the precepts of it in a sweeter light: We read them now as the rules of our happiness, as the model of our new nature, as the holy transcript of the perfections of God, and the blessed advices of our dear Redeemer. We look on *his commandments*, and behold *they are no more grievous to us; for his law is our delight;* 1 John v. 3. Psalm cxix. 77. As for the *threatenings* of the book of God, we once beheld them, perhaps, with a regardless eye, and a stupid heart; or if we were awakened, we read them with utmost terror, as the messengers of our damnation: We beheld them as so many angels with flaming swords, to forbid our entrance into paradise. But since we have seen Jesus with an eye of saving faith, the threatenings of scripture have no more such a dreadful aspect. Since the sword has awoke against the man that was God's fellow, and all the necessary vengeance was executed on Christ, our surety, we behold the threatenings as disarmed of their terror, and no longer a bar to our salvation.

4. The face of God, shining in his terrible attributes of holiness and justice, was dreadful to our souls, so that we could not look upon him, and we turned our eyes away from God: As for his attributes of love and mercy, we had no relish of them; for we had no solid hope in them. We saw nothing in God desirable and delightful to us: We stood afar off; we neglected and forgot him; or else we hid ourselves from him, as Adam did, because we were afraid. But now, since we have beheld God in Christ, as reconciling sinners to himself, now we can look upon him in all his awful and his peaceful attributes without dismay; we can survey and dwell upon all his glories with a sacred pleasure; and lift up our eyes towards him with humble confidence, in prayer or in praise; for we behold him as God reconciled, and a Father, since we have seen Jesus the Mediator and trusted in his name.

5. With what surprize and overwhelming fear did we once behold approaching afflictions, when we were without God, without Christ, and without hope? But now we can look upon sufferings and sorrows without being overwhelmed by them; we can look upon the huge swelling waves without painful apprehensions, and see the floods rise high without fear of being drowned; for we have seen Jesus as it were walking on the water; and we have heard him saying, It is I, be not afraid. We can look to him when we are afar off from our friends, even in the ends of the earth, and find light in darkness, and relief in the midst of our distresses.

6. How formidable once was the face of death. No pencil can describe the monster so hideous to the sense, as he appeared constantly to our awakened souls, before we had seen Christ. What horror did our spirits feel, and our flesh shuddered at the thought of his approach! How frightfully, and yet how justly, did our guilty fancy paint him, and all his attendants, in their terrible array! But the saint looks on death now as a harmless thing, for he has seen Jesus disarm him; Christ has abolished sin, and taken away *the sting from death.* The lively christian can look on it as a friend, or rather as a slave subdued to the service of his Lord, sent on a glorious message, to fetch him to dwell where his blessed Lord is. They shall *be where I am, to behold my glory;* John xvii. 24.

7. The man who has seen Jesus with an eye of faith, can look to the last great tribunal without terror; for he knows and is acquainted with Christ the judge: He has

seen him, and trusted all the important concerns of that day into his hands. *I know*, saith the christian, *whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep* all that *I have committed to him* unto *that day;* 2 Tim. i. 12. Therefore he can see the judgment-seat, and the books opened, without dismay or fearful expectation; for he has seen Jesus cross out all his sins with the blood of his sacrifice: Christ has cancelled them for ever from the great register of heaven, the *book of divine remembrance;* and has shewn him his own name written in the Lamb's book of life, from the foundation of the world.

8. Then he may turn his eyes to all that glorious assembly on high; he may look on the saints in their robes of light, as companions of his blessedness, and the troops of angels as ministers of fire, to execute vengeance on all his enemies; and heralds to prepare his way to the upper heavens. He may fix his eyes with most intense and transporting delight on Christ his sovereign Lord, and behold him hereafter with eyes of sense, amidst the honours of heaven, whom he had beheld here with an eye of faith, amidst the sufferings of the cross, and the agonies of the garden. "This is he," says the saint, "whose voice of mercy I heard in yonder perishing world, and to whom I looked from the ends of the earth, that I might be saved. I believed him then to have *all the fulness of the godhead dwelling in him bodily;* and as *God manifest in the flesh,* I worshipped him, and trusted in him. I behold him now as *the brightness of his Father's glory,* and his divinest image: I find him to be a complete and all-sufficient Saviour; for I stand possessed of his divine salvation. My *knee bows, and my tongue confesses that Jesus is Lord.* He is one with the Father. *To him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honour, and power and glory, for ever and ever.* Amen." *Rev.* v. 13.

DISCOURSE IX.

FAITH BUILT ON KNOWLEDGE.

2 TIM. i. 12.

I KNOW WHOM I HAVE BELIEVED, AND AM PERSUADED THAT HE IS ABLE TO KEEP THAT WHICH I HAVE COMMITTED TO HIM, AGAINST THAT DAY.

THE FIRST PART.

WHEN this epistle was written to Timothy, St. Paul, the writer of it, was a prisoner at Rome; there he lay under a heavy chain, and was exposed to public shame for the sake of the gospel. He had death in a near view, and was preparing for the bloody stroke. For in the sixth verse of the last chapter he says, *I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand: I have fought the good fight, and* my course is finished. But he seems to assure himself upon the words of my text, and grows bold upon this foundation of solid comfort: As though he should say, "*None of these things move me,* nor am I afraid to die; for I shall not be lost: I suffer; but I am not ashamed: I know whom I have trusted to take care of me in death, and all beyond it; even to the great day of retribution."

It is pleasing and glorious to see this apostle, this little mean figure of a man, whose *presence and whose speech were both contemptible;* 2 Cor. x. 10. to see how he builds upon this hope, and assumes divine courage in the midst of pain and shame, in the very face of scandal and martyrdom. "Let me die out of this world, though with infamy, violence, and blood; but I have been told of life, and joys, and honours, in the world to come: and that with such evidence, as to constrain my belief: And I know whom I have believed. Let my barbarous executioner and the sword rob me of the short remains of this present life; but I have committed my soul, and all my infinite concerns, for a long hereafter, into the hands of an almighty and a sure friend, *and I am persuaded he is able to keep* what *I have committed to him against that day.*"

This is the language of a lively hope, and these are the words that have administered constant support to many dying christians. Now that such a hope may appear to be rationally built upon this text, and that our present meditations and discourse may proceed with more regularity and profit, I must briefly explain the words. The chief things that want any explication are these four:

I. Who is this great friend of St. Paul's whom he has known and believed.

II. What he means by believing.

III. What it is he has committed into the hands of this friend.

IV. What is that day, or period of time, when he expected to find all safe which he had thus intrusted him with.

I. Who is this great friend of St. Paul's whom he had believed, and of whose ability he

was so well persuaded? These words can be properly applied to none so well as to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Mediator: and that for these reasons. It is he that is spoken of in the context; *verse* 10. *Who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:* And it is this gospel of Christ for which Paul is not ashamed to suffer, in the words just before the text.

It is Christ who is recommended as the proper object of belief or trust in the New Testament, as God the Father was under the Old: So our Lord himself declares; *John* xiv. 1. *Ye believe in God: believe also in me.* This was the great duty that all the first preachers of the gospel pressed upon their hearers, even a belief on Jesus Christ. This was the perpetual subject of St. Paul's exhortations, the matter of his practice, and the ground of his hope; the instances are so numerous, that it is needless and endless to collect them. It is Jesus Christ into whose hands the Father has put all his saints and children, and committed them to his care, that he may keep them. *John* xvii. 6, 9, 12. *Thine they were, and thou gavest them to me—out of the world: and I have kept them through thy name.* And therefore into the same hands a child of God most naturally commits himself.

II. What does the word believe signify here?

By believing we are here to understand an assent to the revelation that Jesus Christ had made of himself, as sent from the Father to save sinners, and a trust in him for this salvation: For the word πεπίστευκα, in the Greek, naturally includes both, and the following part of the verse confirms this sense, which will be made more completely evident in the improvement of this discourse. Here let it be remarked, from the bold and pathetic manner of speaking, that the apostle appears as a strong believer, as one that had much acquaintance with Christ, and long trusted in him, and every day gained further confirmation of his faith. Observe the expression, *I know whom I have believed,* and am come to a confident persuasion in myself, *that he is able,* &c. It is a faith rising to divine joy: for he mentions it as his support against shame and suffering.

III. When we enquire what it is that the apostle committed to Christ? I think there is no need to limit or confine the trust; all that belongs to poor sinful man, which God the Father had appointed Christ to take care of, may be included in this depositum, this important trust. I have committed my whole person, soul and body, with all my spiritual concerns in this world, and all my everlasting interest in the world to come, into the hands of Christ; my soul, and the affairs of my eternity. And this the apostle seems to have chiefly in his eye, because he was now ready to leave the body, and all things of this present life. So Christ on the cross commits his soul into the hands of his Father; *Luke* xxiii. 46. *Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit.* So Stephen, the first martyr, addresses himself to Christ; *Acts* vii. 59. *Lord Jesus receive my Spirit.* So David, by a spirit of prophecy in evangelic expressions, betrusts his soul with God his Redeemer; *Psalm* xxxi. 6. *Into thy hands I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed it, O Lord God of truth.*

IV. What is that day, that great day, which the apostle means in the text? Without doubt he refers to the last judgment, which is that day, by way of eminence, that day when the works of all other days shall be reviewed, when all mankind shall appear together upon the earth, that have lived in several successive days, and years, and ages, and a decisive sentence shall be passed upon all, without a possibility of reverse: The day on

which the fate of their eternity shall depend, and be determined. It is the custom of the apostle to speak of this day in such a way of absolute eminence, without particular descriptions: So he does twice in this same epistle; *chap.* i. 18. and iv. 8. And it is expressly evident in 2 *Thess.* i. 10. he means this last great day, when Christ *shall appear in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that obey him not: and shall come to be glorified in all them that believe.*

Though believers in Christ who have committed themselves to his charge, find their souls safe in the moment after death, and the beginning of their intellectual heaven, yet this is more insensible to other men, and unseen to the world: The day of judgment is a more remarkable and conspicuous day in the eyes of all the creation, angels, and men; in this day shall Christ openly deliver up his great trust to the Father, who committed all elect sinners into his hands: In this day shall he make it appear that he has been *able and faithful to keep whatsoever God and the saints have committed to him.* Besides, till this day come, Christ has not fulfilled his commission, nor answered his trust for which he is engaged to his Father, and to believers; for this is one part of it, that he would take care of their dying bodies, *and raise them up at the last day;* John vi. 39. The apostle, though he well knew the happiness of separate souls, that were *absent from the body,* and immediately *present with the Lord,* yet he more frequently points to this bright and distant day of the resurrection, when he invites our hope abroad beyond the limits of life and time, to give it the fairest and the longest prospect.

Thus having sufficiently unfolded whatsoever might seem doubtful in the text, let us proceed to a more particular improvement of it: And to this end we may comprise the sense in this one proposition or doctrine:—

A christian lays a solid foundation for his faith and joyful hope in the knowledge of the person whom he trusts. He has some good acquaintance with that great friend of his, to whom he commits all his concerns from time to eternity; and upon this he builds his confidence and comfort; and from this he rises to joy and triumph. The words of my text are the language of an advanced and well-grown faith; and both my doctrine and discourse keep this in view; yet the nature and practice of a sinner's first addresses to Christ by faith, may be easily learned hereby, as I shall shew hereafter. To confirm and improve this doctrine, let us consider,

I. What it is that a christian knows of Christ, that engages his trust and confidence?

II. What sort of knowledge it is, and how he comes by it? And

III. What useful remarks may be drawn from this subject?

First, What is it that a christian knows of Christ that engages his trust in him? The answer may be comprised under these two general heads, *viz.* The personal qualifications of Christ and his special character or commission, as one appointed to take care of souls.

I. A believer knows the particular and personal qualifications of Christ, which render him able to take care of what is committed to him. Now these qualifications depend not only upon the constitution of his person, as one in whom God and man are united, but also upon the labours of his life and the virtue of his sufferings, his death, his resurrection, and his exalted state. Let us descend a little into particulars upon this subject, and take a short and pleasurable survey how well our Lord is qualified to take the charge of souls, and of their eternal welfare.

1. He has almighty power, and can secure whatsoever is committed to him against

all oppositions and dangers; for it is by him that God the Father created all things, and he hath sufficient influence over all the works of his hands; a divine ability to save his favourites, and destroy all that oppose: to ensafe them from every peril that arises from their own weakness, and defend them against every adversary that designs mischief. It was by him that our souls were formed at first in his own and his Father's image; and he can new-mould them into the same form, though it be quite defaced. What iniquity is there in nature, which such almighty grace cannot subdue? What wild imagination, or rebellious thought, in man, which a God cannot reduce to obedience? Should all the wicked of the earth conspire to ruin a christian, what could the impotent malice of creatures avail, if the Creator forbid their violence; or if he who made them encompass the saint round as with a wall of brass, and cover him as with a shield? And what can Satan, the tempter or the destroyer do, if Jesus hold him in his chain, and forbid him to come nigh the believer? The lion of the great deep cannot so much as roar to affright the meanest lamb of the flock, without the permission of *Christ their shepherd.* He can neither tempt us from our duties, nor rifle us of our comforts, if the Son of God command him to silence. And what are all the angels in heaven but the servants of Christ, *all ministering spirits, sent forth to secure them that are heirs of salvation?* Heb. i. 14. What is there within us or without us, in heaven, earth, or hell, that can endanger our happiness, if he that is one with God, and almighty, undertake to save us? To him therefore we commit this great undertaking.

2. He has inconceivable treasures of knowledge, and wisdom unsearchable. He takes notice of the most secret and distant dangers to which his favourites can be exposed: *Hell is naked before him,* and the dark counsels of destruction have no covering: He confounds all the policies of darkness, and knows how to infatuate Satan, the most subtle spirit, when he contrives mischief against the saints. And when our own hearts, for want of foresight, run giddily and wander into snares, he can surround us with divine light for the recovery of our wanderings, and guide us in a safe path homewards. *The hidden workings of sin in the inmost chambers of the soul are open to his eyes;* Heb. iv. 12, 13. And he knows how to prevent it from bringing forth fruit unto death. But on the other hand, his own counsels are laid unsearchably deep: nor can all hell fathom or undermine them. He is supposed to be represented under the character of *wisdom,* shewing her power; *Prov.* viii. 14. *Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom; I am understanding; I have strength.* He knows how to deliver the godly out of every temptation, and to preserve them to his own kingdom. This glorious person is fit to be trusted with the infinite concerns of weak and ignorant creatures.

3. His love and compassion, and willingness to take the charge of souls, is equal to his wisdom and power. Though this be not expressed in the text, yet it is necessarily included; for how could the apostle say with joy, *I know whom I have trusted,* if he knew only that he was *able to save,* without believing him willing? Or why should St. Paul trust him with so valuable a thing as his eternal welfare, if he did not know him compassionate as well as mighty? But his willingness is abundantly evident by all that he did, and all that he suffered to procure salvation for us; for he tells us it was the very design of his coming, *to seek and save that which was lost;* Luke xix. 10. And he must be willing to keep that which he undertakes to seek and to save.

It was his love and willingness to take care of sinners, that brought him down from

heaven to an incarnation, and veiled the dignity of his divine glory in the lowly and debased figure of a man, in the likeness of sinful flesh. A believer reads his willingness in the very features of his manhood; and every poor and painful circumstance of his life writes his love still in fairer characters. What mean all his labours and wearisome travels? His preachings and pleadings with obstinate men all the day, in towns and villages? And his midnight wrestlings with God upon the cold mountains? What mean his kind invitations, and his melting language, *Oh, every one that thirsteth, let him come unto me, and drink! Come unto me all ye that—are weary, and I will give you rest;* Matt. xi. 28. Come to the *physician*, ye that are sick, and I will heal you. *Come ye that are heavy laden*, and I will release you. *He that cometh unto me shall in no wise be cast out;* John vi. 37.

What can be the design of all these tender expressions, but to acquaint us with his willingness to take care of those sinners that commit their souls to him? What means his submission to cruel sufferings and to bitter reproaches? His agonies in the garden? The convulsions of his nature, and the tortures of his soul? Tortures that drew cries and tears from the Son of God! And *his soul was exceeding sorrowful even to* astonishment and *death*. What do all those speak, if not love and willingness to save? What is the language of his arms when spread naked on the cross, but *come unto me, sinners, and I will embrace you?* This is the voice of every wound of his body, while his breath expired amidst blood and groans. Nor can we understand any thing by all these scenes of woe, if we cannot read love in them, and a hearty willingness to secure believing sinners from the wrath to come.

4. He hath perfect righteousness and atoning blood. So that the most guilty soul may trust him safely, for he has obeyed and he has suffered: He has procured pardon for sin, and justification unto eternal life: He has made satisfaction for the vilest of crimes, and for the chief of sinners. He had a human nature that could die, and the indwelling divinity that could put infinite dignity into his death, and render it a full atonement for the heaviest guilt: He has paid our immense debts, and justice acknowledges the receipt in full: He has fulfilled the commands of God's perfect law, which we could never fulfil; and he has borne the *curse* which would have made us for ever miserable: And all this not for himself, but in our stead; and that with this design, that he might redeem us from the curse of the law, and present us before God in his own righteousness, *that we might receive the adoption of sons*, and be for ever *accepted in the beloved;* Gal. iii. 13. and iv. 5. Eph. i. 6.

Here is an all-sufficient righteousness, in which the severe eye of the holiness of God can find no flaw or defect, which is the foundation of our hope; whereas our righteousnesses are mingled with many defilements. Here is a righteousness that shall not be abolished, though the heavens wear away, and the earth wax old. Therefore the *isles* where sinners dwell *shall wait upon him, and on his arm shall they trust;* Isaiah li. 5, 9. It was the great business of the Messiah to finish transgression, to make an end of sin, to make reconciliation for iniquity and *bring in everlasting righteousness;* Dan. ix. 24. And this is of such necessity to our salvation, because of the perpetual frailties of our nature, that a poor trembling believer could not venture his soul safely into any hands but where such a glorious righteousness was found; and from this character our Saviour is pleased to take one of his honourable titles: *Jer.* xxiii. 6. *The Lord our righteousness.* Surely therefore, saith an humble, convinced, and guilty wretch, in such a one will I trust, for I have no merit in me to obtain pardon, I have no righteousness of my own to render me

accepted with God, and I must for ever perish without it. *Surely in the Lord I shall find righteousness as well as wisdom and strength;* Isaiah xlv. 24. And to him I commit my soul.

5. He has great interest with God the Father, and always prevails when he pleads. *Father, I know that thou hearest me always:* John xi. 42. He never prays in vain, for he is ever worthy of the Father's ear. He appears in all the virtue of his original sonship, even when he appears in the name of sinful worms; and when he pleads their cause before the throne, he does it in all the power of his meritorious righteousness, and with the cries of his dying blood. We might doubt of audience when we address ourselves to the great and dreadful God; for we are but his creatures, who have sinned against him, but he is the only begotten Son. We may well stand at a distance, and tremble, for we are rebels; but he is perfect in his loyalty and obedience. We are defiled, but he is pure and unspotted; we might expect thunder and destruction from the Almighty, for the Lord abhors all sin. For such guilty wretches to come before the face of God, though with groans and tears, would but set our rebellion and guilt before his eyes, awaken his wrath, and put him in mind of deserved vengeance; but when Christ appears as a petitioner, he is approved and heard: For he is the Son of his love, he is all holiness: No man can come to the Father but by him, *John* xiv. 6.

Therefore we dare not trust ourselves in meaner hands. *He is able to keep what is committed to him unto the* great *day,* and *to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him; seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them;* and is *such a high-priest as the Son of God, holy, harmless, and undefiled;* Heb. vii. 25, 26. He pleads for aliens and strangers, in the virtue of his sonship; for criminals, in the efficacy of his obedience; and we joyfully commit ourselves, poor sinful and perishing strangers and criminals, to him, to be introduced into the Father's presence, because he has the most powerful influence, and the strongest interest in heaven.

6. He lives for ever: Rev. i. 18. *I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold* I live *for evermore.* Amen. He therefore that hath known death by experience, and now stands firmly possessed of eternal life, is the most proper person that I can trust with all my concerns, my flesh and spirit, for life and death, for time and eternity. Should I presume to make myself my own keeper, yet my utmost care could pretend to reach no further than the term of this life; for whither I go in death is all darkness to me, if I had not known Christ and his gospel, who has *brought life and immortality to light;* 2 Tim. i. 10.

And notwithstanding all those discoveries of the future state, I am still incapable of providing for myself in the invisible world. My soul and body are then separated, and I cannot keep them together, nor take care of them apart. Where this world of souls is I know not, nor can I tell how to secure my best interest there, or direct myself in the right way to the region of sanctified spirits in that world, where I am so much a stranger; all the land of death is in a great measure the region of darkness still; it is a vast unknown country, and far the biggest part of it is a burning climate, a land of torment, sorrow, and despair; and there are a thousand roads that lead down to this gulf of wretchedness; and how shall my poor wandering soul, when dismissed from this flesh, find the way to the land of light, since I know not the paths nor the dangers of the way, and there is no companion in death to guide me through the dark valley? How shall I

dare to plunge into eternity, except some mighty friend be there to take care of me, and conduct me to the seat of the blessed?

But my Lord Jesus lives in that unseen world; he has passed through the region of death, and knows it well; he has the keys of death, and the separate state, and is acquainted with all the avenues of it; he is governor of the land of blessedness, and the fittest guardian to whom I can commit my departing spirit. I leave also my poor remains of flesh to his care: These limbs I leave to moulder into dust, under the wakeful eye of his providence; for he is Lord of this lower world too, and he will raise my flesh to immortality, and rejoin it to my soul at the great day.

7. In the last place, I might add the faithfulness of Christ to fulfil all that he undertakes, is another qualification that encourages our trust. His name is the *Amen, the faithful and the true;* Rev. iii. 14. The Lord is faithful who shall establish you, and keep you from evil; therefore, saith the apostle to the saints at Thessalonica, *We have confidence in the Lord touching you;* 2 Thess. iii. 3, 4. His sincerity is above all possibility of being corrupted, and what he once designs he will accomplish: *Whom he loves, he loves to the end;* John xiii. 1. He is unchangeable in his compassion from the very truth of his nature; his zeal and watchfulness can never admit him to be forgetful one moment of all the infinite concerns that a believer has intrusted with him. His faithfulness adds force and strength to all the encouragements that our faith receives from all the other qualifications of Christ; and if I know all these excellences are found in him, I am persuaded *he is able* and willing *to save to the uttermost;* and I leave my all with him till the last day. Thus we have briefly run through the personal qualifications of Christ. But,

II. Besides these his personal qualifications, which are the objects of a believer's knowledge, and the motives of his faith, there is another thing that engages his confidence in him; and that is, his special character and commission as a Mediator, which he has received from the Father, and which he has voluntarily undertaken to fulfil. Hereby he stands obliged to use all his personal abilities to take care of sinners that are committed to his charge. He often speaks of his being *sent from the Father to do his will.* See John vi. 39. *And this is the Father's will that hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.*

By this commission Christ has a right and authority to exercise all his natural powers and capacities to secure the souls of believers. The justice, and wisdom, and holiness, as well as the grace and mercy of God the Father, joined to commit this authority into his hands. And it is in this sense that *all power in heaven and earth is given him;* Matt. xxviii. 13. And *he is head over all things* for *the church;* Eph. i. 22, 23. When we say that all gifts and all graces are treasured up in the hands of Christ, to be communicated to his people, we mean that, as a commissioned Mediator, he has a rightful authority to exert all his natural and divine powers in the communication of gifts and graces, and holy influences of the Spirit; which power neither he nor his Father did think proper to be exerted without satisfaction made for sin as Mediator.

Behold then our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of Mary, and the Son of God; behold him in all the sufficiency of the united godhead, and in all the glory and authority of his mediatorial commission, fully capacitated to keep whatsoever is committed to him! The believer sees this and rejoices; he beholds all the souls of sinners designed for salvation *given into the hands* of Christ, *by the Father, to keep;* which Christ himself often

speaks of in the xvith and xviith chapters of the gospel of St. John. And he reads those words of his Lord with abundant joy, *And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one;* John x. 28, 29, 30.

" Now," says the believer, " shall I not venture my eternal state in those hands where God himself has laid it? Shall I not choose him to be my guardian in this my weak and helpless state, whom the Father has appointed for this very purpose, and trusted with the care of all his children? Who is so fit to be my shepherd as that glorious person to whom the Father has committed the charge of all his sheep? God the Father knows him well, that he is equal to the great undertaking, or else he would never have intrusted him with the souls of his chosen ones; and I, through his grace, have beheld such abilities, such love, and such faithfulness in him, that he is sufficient to answer the weighty charge; therefore I have intrusted him with my all, and *I know whom I have trusted.*"

Besides, says the christian, this is the person whom God has ordained to take care of his own infinite honours, as well as of the immortal concerns of men; and where can I trust my soul better than where the all-wise God has trusted all his own glory: The government of heaven and earth, of angels and men, is laid *upon his shoulders*, and of his dominion there is no bound, there is no end; *Isaiah* ix. 6. The biggest affairs of kingdoms and nations, all the revolutions and concerns of the worlds of nature, grace, and glory, are committed to Christ the Mediator; *all things are delivered into his hands by the Father;* John iii. 35. And surely, saith the christian, there is none like him to take care of my soul; since God himself, upon a survey of all the creation, found none like him; none so fit to be intrusted with all his own infinite concerns, in all the worlds which he hath made. *I know therefore whom I have believed*, when I believed in Jesus, and *I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.*

Secondly, After having discovered what it is that a christian knows of Christ that engages his belief and firm confidence, we proceed to enquire, What sort of knowledge this is, or how he comes to know him, so as to trust in him, and rejoice in his faith? The answer may be reduced to these two heads: A believer that is arrived at such a knowledge of Christ, has obtained it partly by the testimony of others, and partly by his own experience.

I. It is a knowledge that arises from the testimony of others. And this sort of knowledge is generally called faith; that is, the believing of any proposition upon the authority of those that relate it; and according as the witnesses that make the report are more credible and more numerous, so we give the firmer assent to their testimony; our faith grows so much the stronger, and our knowledge is the more certain. Now the witnesses that give evidence to the power and faithfulness of Christ our Saviour, are so gloriously credible in themselves, and so many in number, that a believer has the most rational and solid ground for his faith. Let us take a short survey of these witnesses, and humbly examine their testimony.

God himself, the all-wise, the true, and the eternal God, in the person of the Father, has borne witness from heaven to his Son Christ Jesus in all ages. This he did in old time by visions and voices, by prophecies and holy institutions. It is of him that *God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets, since the world began;* Acts iii. 21. What is *the seed of the woman, that should break the serpent's head?* Gen. iii. 15. but a

promise of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour, given to Adam, to prevent his despair; and a testimony of his power to *destroy the works of the devil*, and to save fallen man? What is the seed of Abraham, *in whom all nations should be blessed;* Gen. xxii. 18. but a prophecy of the blessings of life and salvation to the nations of the earth, by Jesus the son of Abraham? Who was Shiloh, of whom Jacob prophesied, to him shall be the gathering of the people, but Christ, who was sent of God, that the gentiles might commit their souls into his hands, and join themselves to him as their head and governor? *Gen.* xlix. 10.

It would be endless to run through all the messages from God, which the inspired prophets of old delivered to men, and which gave divine testimony to the Saviour that should be born. Who was the angel of the covenant, that was sent to conduct the Jews through the wilderness, and to keep that nation, and to bring them safe to Canaan? Who was the captain of the Lord's host, that was sent and appeared to Joshua, engaging for the protection of him and his army? What was the vision that appeared to Isaiah, *the Lord sitting upon* a throne in much glory and power, but so many prefigurations of the Son of God, that was to take our nature upon him, and become a Saviour? What were all these appearances of God in the form of man, but signs and pledges, and, as it were, essays towards his incarnation? What were the types of the Old Testament but emblems of deliverance, atonement, and salvation, that were to be conferred by Christ upon those sinners that would trust him with their souls? What was the ark wherein Noah was saved, when he committed his life to the keeping of God, in that floating house, amidst the flood of waters, but an assurance of safety to those sinners who make Christ their refuge, when the floods of divine wrath rise high? What was the design of the bloody sacrifices, the sacrifices of expiation, but to hold forth the method whereby Christ should secure guilty souls from death.

Time would fail me to speak of the brazen and the golden altar; of burning the flesh of beasts, and the smoking incense; of the ark of the covenant where the law was kept, and the cover of it, which was called the mercy-seat, where the God of glory dwelt under the form of a bright cloud: Time would fail me to speak of the tabernacle of Moses, and the temple of Solomon; of the cities of refuge, appointed for the safety of casual murderers; of the high-priest, of his garments, and of his offices, who was to keep the names of the tribes of Israel upon his breast and upon his shoulder. These were all the institutions and appointments of God himself, to assure us, by various carnal emblems, of the fulness of that salvation by Jesus Christ, for which no single emblem was sufficient.

Let us descend to later times, and behold God the Father giving testimony to his Son, by kindling a new star in the heavens at his birth, and sending it as a guide to lead the wise men from the east and from the rising sun, to a greater and sweeter light, *the Morning Star*, and *the Sun of Righteousness*. He sent a voice from heaven at his baptism, and pronounced in distinct language, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;* Matt. iii. 17. Twice more did he speak from heaven, and with an audible voice, in the time of the life of Christ, attest this mission: A believer knows many of these things, and receives the testimony of God. And *this is the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son, that eternal life is in him;* 1 John v. 9, 11.

Christ himself is another witness that testifies his own ability to save sinners, and keep what is committed to him, John viii. 18. *I am one that bear witness of myself; and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.* And though he bear record of himself, yet

his record is true and credible; for he came from heaven, and was made man in an extraordinary way; and he rose again after death, and ascended to heaven; which seems to be the meaning of those words, *For I know whence I came, and whither I go;* which are brought as a reason of the truth of his testimony, *John* viii. 14. He appeared amongst men with all the undisputed signs of the Messiah upon him; and the doctrines that he preached, and the miracles that he wrought, and the convulsions of nature at his death, and the wonders of his resurrection, all agree to confirm the mission of Christ, and his ability to save. A christian beholds the Son of God coming from the dead, with this message to him: "I am able to deliver from death those that believe in me; to keep their souls safe in my hand, and to raise their bodies up to life everlasting: For behold *I was dead, and am alive, and live for evermore.* Amen; *Rev.* i. 18.

Or shall I rather say, that the miracles of Christ were the testimonies which the Holy Spirit gave to the mission of Christ, the Son of God; for they are sometimes in scripture ascribed to the Spirit. Matt. xii. 28. *I cast out devils by the Spirit of God.* And one of the three witnesses in heaven to the gospel of Christ is the Spirit of God. 1 John v. 6, 7. *It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.* That Spirit and power by which he *opened the eyes of the blind, made the lame to walk,* and *the dead to rise,* does effectually attest his power to take care of those that are intrusted with him: For these wonders were wrought with a design to confirm this doctrine; and upon this account Christ is said to be *justified* in, or *by the Spirit;* 1 Tim. iii. 16. His commission was sealed, and his authority attested by these mighty works of the blessed Spirit. Thus the believer has a threefold witness from heaven, to give him the knowledge of Christ, and to confirm his faith; and this is abundantly sufficient to justify his trust in Christ Jesus.

But he has many other witnesses also to the same truth: He can call all the holy prophets and saints since the world began, to bring in their witness, who told of the power of Christ to save, in dark speeches, when they lived in this world, and now find themselves safe in his hands in the world of light. A believer can call the noble company of apostles, the holy army of martyrs and confessors, to attest the same doctrine; who, through terrible temptations of Satan, and the wrath of man; who, through fires and waters, and many deaths, have committed their souls to his divine keeping, and found them in safety beyond the grave.

The believer can add the testimony of all his fellow-saints now living, who, by venturing their eternal concerns into the hands of Christ, have found safety and rest, strength against sin, and peace of conscience; divine joy, courage against sufferings, and triumphs in the midst of dangers. They all with one voice cry out, "*Not unto ourselves but to thy name be all the glory;* for thy grace has kept us since we committed ourselves unto thee; and not one of us is lost; and we continue to trust our all with thee till the great day; and we are assured of safety, though our dangers are infinite."

You see here what a rational and solid foundation a christian has for his knowledge of Christ, and his faith in him. It is built upon testimonies so numerous, so credible, and so divine, well might the apostle say, I know whom I have trusted: And he becomes a witness to us even to the end of the world, to direct souls to the same refuge. When a sinner is awakened to see his dreadful guilt, and danger for eternity, and is making earnest enquiry, what shall I do for my soul? Where shall I trust it, that it may

be kept safe for ever? Let his eye be directed to this able and all-sufficient Saviour, by so long a train of witnesses, and the Holy Spirit with them, and he can no longer doubt whither to apply himself, or to whose hands he should betrust his eternal concerns.

II. The knowledge that a believer has of Christ's ability to save, arises not only from the witness of others, but from his own inward and sensible experience. The apostle speaks here not as a young believer, but as one that had known Christ long, had long trusted him, and gained daily confirmations of his faith, as was hinted before. Though a sinner at first is drawn to Christ by the report that is made of him by others, either by his education, by reading or hearing the word, or by holy conference; yet afterwards he grows up to an establishment and assurance of faith by the sweet experience he has had of what Christ has done for him; and he saith to the minister, and to his fellow-christian, and to the apostles, and the prophets, as all the neighbours said to the woman of Samaria, John iv. 42. *Now we believe, not merely because of this saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know indeed that this is the Christ, the Saviour of the world.*

I am well satisfied that it is from this sort of knowledge, as well as the former, it is from experience as well as faith, that so many saints have been able to assume the words of my text, and to triumph in the approaches of death. For though they may have learned the knowledge of Christ, and his ability to save, and that from their earliest youth, by the pious instructions of their parents, by the ministry of their teachers, and much converse with the holy scriptures, yet they have a more large and confirmed knowledge of Christ, from the many sensible effects of his love and power upon their souls, and from their constant converse with him by meditation and prayer, both in their secret retirement, and in their daily walk with God. They can say from a sweet and rich experience, perhaps from their youngest years, and downwards, to maturer age, I know whom I have believed.

"I know my conscience was burdened with guilt, and I could find no relief till I saw the cross of Christ, and carried my guilty conscience thither; the man that hung upon the tree took my burden off, sprinkled me with his own blood, and undertook to secure me from the wrath of God for ever. I know who it was that relieved me from these terrors, and I rejoice in his atonement. I had no righteousness to appear in before a pure and a holy God, and I had just reason to dread his presence as *a consuming fire;* but the same glorious person put a complete righteousness upon me, through faith, whereby I can stand before a just God with humble confidence; and I know and adore the *Lord my righteousness.*"

"My nature was all corrupted, my sins were strong; I had no power to think or to do that which was good; and I know whose grace it was that renewed all my nature, that formed my soul to religious thoughts, that set me upon the work of mortification, and assisted me in those divine labours. I remember what powerful seeds of vanity were found in my heart; and if I had not given up the garden to Christ's keeping, it had been all overrun with weeds, and neither fruit nor flower had ever appeared there. When I met with temptations, I found myself a very unequal match for them; for I was by nature all weakness; but by the knowledge of Christ I have obtained strength: I have often found his grace sufficient for me, and his strength made perfect in my infirmity; I know by whose power it is that I stand, and I am persuaded that he that has kept me hitherto, is still able to save me from falling; I have tried his grace so often, and found it

sufficient hitherto, that I will trust him for what remains. I have committed my soul therefore to his keeping till the day of my death, till the great day of my resurrection. And we who are alive believe concerning those that are gone, that our blessed Lord has fulfilled a great part of his trust; has introduced their spirits into the presence of the Father with exceeding joy; and will fulfil the design of his love, when the dead shall arise to complete glory."

Thus I have endeavoured to make it appear, that a believer knows so much of the person of Christ, of his qualifications for a Saviour, and his divine commission for this purpose, as to engage his trust and confidence in him: And he obtains this knowledge by testimonies of sufficient evidence; and by his own experience he confirms his faith. The reflections that attend this subject will compose the next discourse.

DISCOURSE X.

FAITH BUILT ON KNOWLEDGE.

2 TIM. i. 12.

I KNOW WHOM I HAVE BELIEVED, AND I AM PERSUADED THAT HE IS ABLE TO KEEP THAT WHICH I HAVE COMMITTED TO HIM, AGAINST THAT DAY.

THE SECOND PART.

THOUGH the Redeemer was gone to the invisible world, and St. Paul never knew him while he was on earth, yet he was no stranger to him when he wrote this epistle. Christ is unseen to men, but not unknown to the believer. The apostle was so well acquainted with the person and the commission of Christ, that he could venture all into his hands to the day of judgment: he could look forward to that day with divine pleasure, and rejoice in the midst of present sufferings, upon the assurance of his future safety. From the example of this great and holy man in my text, I have drawn this observation.

Doctrine. A christian lays a solid foundation for his faith and joyful hope in the knowledge of Christ Jesus, in whom he trusts.

Here I have shewn at large what it is of Christ that a christian is acquainted with, in order to trust him. Besides the wonderous constitution of this person, as a man, *in whom dwells the fulness of the godhead bodily*, many glorious and all-sufficient qualifications of a Mediator are found in him. Ye have heard how great and how good, how wise and how faithful, he is; how well fitted to undertake the salvation of the guilty, because he hath provided an atonement and complete righteousness; how well furnished to take the charge of bringing sinners to a state of grace and holiness, because he hath the fulness of the Spirit in him, to communicate to men, in order to renew their natures, and fit them for heaven. I have shewn what a commission he received from the Father, to undertake the great work of the salvation of men; and thereby as he hath a natural power, so he hath a legal authority to take the charge of souls that are committed to him. O the glorious furniture of the great Mediator! O the divine commission that gives security to faith! How happily are they joined in Jesus the Lord! and how much doth the knowledge of this conduce to a believer's comfort.

I have also shewn at large, in the second place, how a christian comes by this knowledge: He has abundant testimony to the truth of all these things from heaven and from earth: God himself hath given witness from heaven, by miracles, visions, and voices: The apostles, prophets, and martyrs, have filled the earth with their witness; and, by most convincing arguments, have proved the all-sufficiency of Christ to save. The believer hath a witness in his own soul, to the power and grace of Christ when he feels

holiness wrought in his heart by the gospel, and divine peace in his conscience, with the foretastes of heaven. Now from such a knowledge, derived from scripture and inward experience, he grows up to a holy courage in believing; he can venture his immortal concerns with assurance into the hands of Christ; he is bold, and triumphs in his faith, and can suffer for it without being ashamed. Thus having briefly recalled the doctrinal part, I proceed now to the last thing I proposed; and that was, to attempt some useful remarks on this subject or discourse.

I. Here we may learn the true nature of saving faith in Christ. It is a committing of the soul into the hands of Christ, from a due knowledge of his person, and his power to save. It is true, that my text is not the mere language of a young and feeble faith, but the divine oratory of holy confidence, joy, and triumph; yet the nature of saving faith is so fully comprised, and so plainly expressed in it, that I have often thought I know not any one single verse in the whole Bible, that gives us so clear and distinct an account of this grace. By the words of my text it is rendered as intelligible as love, or hope, or fear, or almost any of the common actions of life or religion. It is a committing or betrusting of the soul to Christ for complete salvation, flowing from a sense of our sin and misery; a knowledge of his personal qualifications, and his divine commission; or a persuasion of his ability and willingness to keep what is thus committed to him to the day of final judgment.

Saving faith is not a feeble belief of the words, or works, or power of Christ, upon a short hearsay and slight notice, but it is built upon knowledge and just evidence. It is not a mere doctrinal and historical assent to the truths which our Saviour spoke; nor is it a mere rational conviction by the best arguments, that Christ is furnished with such abilities to save: It is not a sudden fit of desire, or hope, or well-wishing to our souls to be saved by Christ; nor is it a rash and bold presumption that Christ will save me, and make me happy: But it is a solemn betrusting of my soul into his hands for salvation, built upon a deep sense of my own sin and danger; a solid knowledge of his sufficient furniture for such an undertaking; and an earnest desire to be made partaker of this salvation, in the full nature of it, both the holiness and the joy.

Saving faith therefore supposes and implies in it a lively sense of the guilt of our sins, and the eternal misery that is like to ensue; a sight of the just vengeance of God to which we are exposed, and how incapable we are to make atonement for ourselves, or procure pardon; a sense of our want of a perfect righteousness to justify us before God, and how impossible it is for us to make one out of our own works and duties; for why should we trust another to do that which we can do for ourselves.

It supposes also a sight of the corruption of our natures, our perpetual tendency to fresh iniquity, and our weakness to perform the duties of life or religion; our natural delight in sin and the creature, and our natural aversion to God, and all that is holy; together with our utter incapacity of enjoying heaven whilst we are in this temper, and our impotence to change our own natures, and turn our souls from earth to heaven.

It supposes and implies a painful sense of our having offended God, and weariness of this state of sin, and a hearty willingness to be delivered from it: For why should we seek after the knowledge of such an almighty Friend and Saviour, if we were not fearful of eternal misery without one? Or why should we concern ourselves about a person that can subdue sin in us, if we are not so far made willing to part with it, as to have our natures reformed into holiness? And let it be observed, that this painful sense, this in-

ward weariness of the power and reign of sin in us, and this desire of deliverance from it, is the most essential part of true repentance, or the conversion of the soul from sin to God.

It includes, in the next place, a sight and belief of the all-sufficiency of Christ to supply our wants; that there is atonement in him for our sins, and pardon procured by him; that there is righteousness with him for our justification and acceptance unto eternal life; and all this by the means of his perfect obedience and death: That there is power and grace in him to conquer all our sins, to suppress temptations, to reform our vicious appetites, to incline our wills to God, to strengthen our endeavours for the practice of all holiness; to keep us in the favour and in the image of God, and conduct us safe to heaven; and that he is appointed by the Father to do all this for sinners.

It consists formally in a committing of the guilty and sinful soul to the care of Christ, according to his Father's commission to take care of lost souls, and to keep that which is committed to him. It is a secret address of the heart unto Christ, whereby we resign our guilty persons to him, to be pardoned for the sake of his sufferings; our unrighteous souls to be accepted through his righteousness; our sinful and polluted natures to be sanctified by the power of his grace, and to be preserved safe to death and glory.

After all this, there follows an acquiescence, or rest of the soul in Christ, which he promised, when he called *the weary* and *the heavy laden sinners to come to him;* Matt. xi. 28. And this is accompanied with a good hope and expectation of all this salvation from Christ, for which the sinner trusts in him: And this excites his love and thankfulness to Christ, and awakens all his endeavours to a warm pursuit of heaven, in the path of holiness, in which God hath appointed us to walk to the kingdom. Thus every divine promise, every threatening, and every command, obtains a due authority over the heart, under the vital influence of such a faith. This is not a lazy and a slothful confidence, that casts away all care by throwing it on Christ, and walks in a secure and bold neglect of duty: For a believer well knows that he is bound to take the utmost care of his own soul, to work out his salvation with holy fear, to watch against temptation, to resist every rising sin, and persevere to the death; though from a sense of his own insufficiency, he builds his safety and hope on the all-sufficiency of Christ.

Let it be observed here, that it is not necessary that all these several workings of the heart should be plain, and distinct, and sensible, in every act of faith, nor in every true believer: For the actions of the soul, and especially the springs, and the motives, and designs of those actions, are so hidden, and so mingled with each other, that they are not all distinctly perceived even in the soul where they are transacted. When the jailor cried out, *What shall I do to be saved?* Acts xvi. 30. or when the poor man in the gospel, *Mark* ix. 24. said, *Lord, I believe; help my unbelief;* there were a multitude of crowding thoughts and passions that produced and mingled with those ideas and expressions of fear and faith, which could never be distinctly apprehended and recounted by the persons that felt them. But this I say, that most, or all the particulars I have mentioned, seem to be necessary in the very nature of a true and saving faith in Christ, where the gospel is known and preached so clearly as it is in our times, and must be presupposed or involved, and secretly included, in the very act of believing unto eternal life. It is a committing the soul to the care of Christ, from such motives, and with such designs, as I have described.

This account of saving faith guards it against all the mistakes of the age, and secures it against all the inroads of error on either side. A christian that takes in all these views, will not easily be led away by the popish, or any other doctrine, where faith is supposed to be a mere assent to the revelations of the gospel, nor will he be ensnared by the unwary expressions of some great writers, that faith is a full persuasion of our own salvation, which has given too much countenance to Antinomian follies. He that has this knowledge and this belief which I have described, and does thus heartily commit his soul to Christ, *shall in no wise be cast out*, and can never miscarry; but by repeated exercises of this faith, and humble watchfulness in walking with God, he shall grow rich in experience, and shall learn to say with triumph, *I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able*, &c.

II. We may infer from this discourse, the value of a solid and regular knowledge of the person of Christ, and his gospel: It lays a good foundation for our first faith, and afterwards for its growth to a steady assurance. When we well know whom we have believed, we believe with a firmer confidence, and with boldness we commit our infinite concerns into the hands of a person of whose ability and faithfulness we are well persuaded; at first, by a distinct knowledge of his gospel, and afterwards by an experimental acquaintance with his power and grace. Our hope in his salvation is hereby better established, and our hearts grow fearless. Such *a hope is an anchor* that loses not its hold in the wildest storms, and makes the vessel ride in safety.

What is the reason of the perpetual doubts and despondencies of some christians, that have made a long profession of the gospel? Whence is it that they are alarmed at every turn, and tremble, as though all were lost? How comes it to pass, that these hurries of mind should return so often, and almost overwhelm some pious souls, that walk watchfully and humbly with God? Is it not because their faith has been too much built upon sudden and warm affections, without so solid a ground of regular knowledge? When persons of a weaker mind have felt a strong and divine impression from some particular scripture, or from some bright sentence in a sermon, which hath displayed the grace and salvation of Christ, they have made this inward sensation the ground of their hope; they have fed still upon this cordial, and lived upon this support. And whensoever these warm impressions return, they trust in Christ afresh, and rejoice sensibly in his salvation: But they can hardly give a rational account what their faith is, or why they believe; and when these extraordinary supplies fail them, they sink, and tremble, and die.

I confess, if this faith change their natures, purify their hearts from the love of sin, and make them walk in holiness, far be it from me to suspect the truth of it. But this I must say, that such souls are in danger of perpetual disquietudes, ready to be *shaken by every wind*, and exposed to every gloomy temptation: When the flashes of light are gone, they are all darkness and terror, because they cannot render a reason of the hope that was in them, from a distinct acquaintance with the person in whom they had fixed their hope, or from his rich ability to save.

It is not a piece of wisdom in natural things, to trust a man with affairs of importance before we know him; or if we do, every little dark circumstance, every flying report, will be ready to shake our hearts, and fill us with fear, though perhaps our concerns may be safe in his hands. And it is not a piece of holy wisdom to trust Christ himself infinitely, and yet be contented to know him but a very little. Such souls may be safe at last, be-

cause the Lord, whom they trust, is honest and faithful; but they expose themselves to many fears, and frequent torments of mind, all the time of their absence from him. Let Athenians build their altars to the unknown God, but a christian should not trust in an unknown Saviour.

Let us all be persuaded then to learn much of Christ, that with honour and wisdom we may trust him much; that we may venture our all for eternity into his hands, and rest securely upon well-known power and faithfulness. *They that know thy name,* O God our Saviour, *will put their trust in thee;* Psalm ix. 10. There is a noble instance of holy prudence in a well-built and well-settled faith. Let us not fancy that we know Christ enough, when we have attained merely such a degree of knowledge as is absolutely necessary for conversion, or so much as is sufficient to make a profession of his name, and thereby obtain a right to the fellowship of the saints. Let us not be content to be always babes, feeble and fearful because unknowing. We should think no pains too much to acquire divine knowledge, and to improve it; and to this end, let the holy scriptures be our daily study, for these are the writings that testify of Christ. Let us not censure the preachers that feed us with a word of knowledge, nor complain of dry discourses, when in any particular sermon the doctrines of religion are chiefly insisted on; for these are the foundation of our wisest faith, and the pillars of solid and exalted joy. It was knowledge that carried the great apostle into that extacy of pleasure, and divine mortification, to every thing besides Christ, Phil. iii. 8, 9. *Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but dung—that I might be found in him,* &c.

Seek after experimental acquaintance with Christ. Follow the advice of St. Peter, 2 Epistle iii. 18. *Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus.* This is attained by much converse with him, in meditation and prayer; by secret and hourly addresses to him; by frequent breathings of soul towards our heavenly Friend, in whose hands lie all our immortal concerns. Make daily observations of the work and power of his grace upon your hearts, in your performance of duties, and success against temptations; and have a care that you lose not the things which ye had wrought: Take heed lest you decline in your acquaintance with Christ, that your faith and hope being built upon a regular knowledge, you may have a blessed treasure of christian experiences to establish and exalt it.

III. How unkind and unnatural is it for parents to let the souls of their children perish for want of knowledge! How necessary to acquaint them betimes with the gospel of Christ, that they may trust in him betimes, and that their souls may be safe in the great day! If I should ask every mother in the assembly this question, do you not desire all your children should be young believers? But how can they believe in him whom they have not known? How can you expect they should trust in any person, if you have never brought them into his acquaintance? Or will you content yourselves that you give them the name of christians in baptism, and let them know nothing of Christ.

Think it not enough, therefore, to make them repeat the words of a catechism, but enquire what they mean by such and such words and sentences, which they pronounce; and thus you will discover where their ignorance lies: Then inform them, and assist their young understandings. Acquaint them with the sin of their natures, with the sins of their life, with the anger of God, and danger of hell, till they are afraid of it in earnest, and ask, *what they shall do to be saved.* Then teach them the knowledge of Christ, in his

glorious person; in his excellent qualifications of love, power, and faithfulness; teach them the doctrine of his death as a satisfaction for sin, and of that all-sufficient righteousness, upon which only they can find acceptance with a just and a holy God: Acquaint them with his pleading in heaven as a *priest* for sinners here on earth, and his reigning there as *king*, to give grace and holiness, pardon and repentance, and salvation, to all that are willing to accept it in his own way. And let this practice be continually repeated, till, by frequent enquiries, you find they understand what you teach them.

Shew them how to commit their souls into the hands of Christ by prayer and faith, and how to walk watchfully in obedience to all the commands of Christ, to practise the duties of religion toward God, and the duties of morality toward men; in order to evidence their faith, and to bring them onward to complete salvation. Tell them of the last great judgment-day, when all their secret actions shall be brought to light before God, angels, and men; and when they must give an account to Jesus the Judge, of all their behaviour here. Make it evident that there is no way to appear with safety before him as a Judge, but by committing their souls to him, as their kind and all-sufficient Friend: And then holy parents may hope to meet their sons and their daughters with comfort at the right hand of the Lord in that day.

It is an acquaintance with such a Saviour, and such a trust in him, that will prepare them not only for the last judgment, but for every circumstance of life, and the various changes they may pass through in the day of their pilgrimage; and it will fit them for an early or an aged death. If they should be exalted to riches or honour in the world, such a faith will be of abundant use and safety to them, that the keeping of their souls was committed in their younger days to the care of Christ; and they will carry their profession and their conversation unspotted with the world, through ten thousand snares attending such circumstances, by the influence of such a faith.

If they fall under various and heavy afflictions in the several stages of their life, it will be their perpetual relief, that all their concerns are in the hands of a merciful and a *faithful High-priest*, who himself has suffered in the flesh, and knows how to pity them that suffer. When the tumults of sorrow gather together, and the waves rise high, to distract and overwhelm their spirits, they will find many an hour of sweet serenity and calmness, by having committed themselves to that Jesus, who can say to the waves, *peace and be still.* But this leads me to the next inference.

IV. We may infer from this discourse, how well God has provided for the safety and comfort of believers; for their safety, because he has set up and appointed a person so able to take care of their souls; and for their comfort, because he gives them such a knowledge of him in his own word, and by their own spiritual observation. It is this knowledge, this faith and holy confidence, in the power and faithfulness of Christ, that prepares the soul for all accidents in the natural and spiritual life; it is this gives the christian his support and comfort under every change of circumstances; and makes him valiant, and ready to meet them all. Shall we run through a few of these seasons briefly?

In times of abounding error, when the gospel of Christ is corrupted, the believer gives diligence to reading, that he may hold fast the form of sound words; he prays for the enlightening Spirit to confirm him in the truth; but he rejoices in this, that his soul is in the hands of Christ, who will not suffer him to be seduced into damnable heresies, but will secure him from every fatal mistake.

Under the violent temptations of Satan, it is a support to the saint, that the powers of hell are all led captive, and trodden under foot by him who is the guardian of his eternal welfare. He knows that his Lord will save him from the mouth of the lion, *will deliver him from every evil work, and will preserve him to his heavenly kingdom:* 2 Tim. iv. 17. Under a sense of fresh guilt, and sins of daily infirmity, the christian mourns bitterly, because of his failings and follies, but hopes for security from ruining transgressions, and the unpardonable sin, because the virtue of the atonement in which he trusts is eternal: Christ has undertaken to preserve him from final apostasies, though the best of saints are not secured here from the workings of sin.

And under these discomposures of mind, and the frequent vexations and uneasinesses in the things of this life, that may ruffle their tempers, had it not been for their acquaintance with Christ, they had been sometimes utterly overcome; but how often have they retired into their closets, and left the tumult of their thoughts behind them in the world, while they went to converse with him by prayer, who had the care of their spiritual concerns? Or, at least, they have cried unto the Lord because of those uneasy companions; have shook them off in his presence with holy anger, and returned into the world again with serenity in their countenance, and victory and peace in their souls. This strength they derive from their blessed Lord, whom they have chosen for their divine guardian.

Under the weakness of our graces, and the inconstancy of our tempers, it is a matter of relief to an humble saint, that the keeper of his soul is compassionate, and pities his frailties; is almighty, and will strengthen him under his weaknesses; is unchangeable, *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.* The lambs of his flock are weak, and cannot follow him in some rugged and difficult paths; then *he gathers the lambs with his arms, and carries them in his bosom;* Isaiah xl. 11. And there are some of the sheep of his fold that are ready to straggle into forbidden ways, to wander abroad, and lose themselves in the wilderness: But *the Lord is their Shepherd, he restoreth their souls, and leads them again into the way of righteousness, for his name's sake;* Psalm xxiii. 3.

In an hour of desertion, when God has withdrawn his joys, when the light of his countenance is concealed, and darkness lies upon the spirit, the believer holds fast his hope, though his rejoicings are interrupted; for he has committed his soul to the care of Christ, who has full interest with the Father, and can prevail for the recovery of his joys again. While he *walks in darkness, and has no light of comfort, still he can trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God;* Isaiah l. 10.

Under sickness, and pains of nature, that threaten a dissolution of the body, the pillow of a believer lies easy under his head; for his soul, his dearest part, is in safe keeping, and cannot perish. Amidst all the languishings of nature, we have often heard the triumphs of grace from the mouth of a lively christian. *If I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for my almighty Friend is with me;* Psalm xxiii. 4. *I know that if the tabernacle of this earthly house be dissolved, I have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* There is a *mansion* above *prepared* for me by him, who has the care of my eternity. He went up on high, on purpose to *prepare a place,* and *he will come again, and take me to himself; that where he is, there I may be also; if it were not so, he would have told me; for I know whom I have trusted; and whither he is gone I know, and the way I know;* 2 Cor. v. 1. John xiv. 2, 3, 4.

Upon this view and assurance, the dying saint attempts the praises of his Lord, and

practises something like the worship of heaven before-hand. *To him that is able to keep me from falling, and will present me faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,—be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.* Amen. Jude 24, 25.

V. See whence ariseth the divine and amazing courage that some christians have expressed under the foulest reproaches and sharpest sufferings for the sake of the gospel. This holy fortitude springs from a good acquaintance with the person of Christ, and a full persuasion of his ability to save. When we are ignorant and in the dark, we are afraid of every thing, but courage is the effect of light and knowledge. A faith that is well founded on a due knowledge of Christ, can raise the suffering christian above the power of shame and fear. And I choose to make this remark a distinct head of discourse, because it is the very occasion on which the apostle introduces the words of my text. *Christ has abolished death*, verse 10. *He has brought life and immortality to light by the gospel.* This I am well acquainted with, saith the apostle; for this very person, even Christ, my Lord, has appointed me a preacher of this doctrine: *For which cause I also suffer.—Nevertheless I am not ashamed: For I know whom I have believed; and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.*

It is a point of folly for a man to expose himself to reproach, and pain, and death, without any solid reason, or just hope of recompence. But St. Paul was no fool, when he *was ready to be bound and die for the name of Christ;* for he looked forward to the last great day; he saw his immortal interest safe under the care of Christ, whom he had well known and trusted; and therefore he had good reason to venture all on earth for the sake of such a Friend in heaven. He saw the recompence secure in the hands of Christ; and therefore, says he,

"I am not ashamed of my sufferings, nor of my faith. Let my persecutors destroy this flesh, but they cannot touch my soul, for it is in safe hands: I know where I have trusted it. Let the Jews or the Romans kill this body, but it shall be raised up again at the great day, by his power, to whom I have committed my all for here and for hereafter; for he is able to expel death from his possessions, and make the grave restore all its prisoners. I know his power *to subdue all things to himself.* Let them load me with shame and reproaches now, but I shall look them in the face in that day with courage, and they shall tremble, and be confounded with everlasting shame. They may deprive me of a mortal life, and all that belongs to it, but they cannot rob me of a blessed immortality; for the Lord of life hath taken charge of that important concern, and I am assured he is able to keep it. *None can pluck me out of his hand:* He will present me safe before his Father in that day, and make it appear with divine evidence, that *the light afflictions which I suffer now, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is then to be revealed.* He puts me into the same promise with himself; *if I suffer with him, I shall also reign with him;* and his promises are an eternal security. *I know whom I have believed.*" Thus you see what a glorious encouragement may be assumed from such an acquaintance with Christ, to endure the cross, and despise the shame, for the sake of Christ and his gospel.

I grant there have been weak christians, of lower degrees of knowledge, that have borne sufferings and martyrdom with a courage beyond all expectation. There have been some babes in Christ that could not dispute for the truth, yet they could die for it.

But let it be noted, that such persons have had generally but small advantage for improvement in knowledge; either they were young converts, or had but mean natural parts, or a poor education, yet a sincere zeal for their Lord: And perhaps also they had a bright and strong experimental knowledge of the gospel, by its sweet and sanctifying influences. Now when such as these have been called out by providence to bear a testimony to the truth, they have had a mouth and wisdom given them immediately from heaven, which all their adversaries have not been able to gainsay, nor resist, and this according to the promise made to the apostles, in their infancy of understanding, *Luke* xxi. 15. They have been upheld under their torments by the arms of Christ, and by his sensible presence: Their divine fortitude hath been all inspiration. But you that have fair and daily opportunities for a large acquaintance with the gospel, have no reason to expect such miracles for your assistance in our day, if ye refuse the appointed means of hearing, reading, and meditation.

Take this further advice also along with you: While you are treasuring up truth, seek after holiness, and every grace. See to it, that all the knowledge you gain by these methods be wrought into your very souls, and that you experience the sanctifying and comforting power of these truths on your consciences, your passions, and your lives. Divine truth, thus turned into spiritual nourishment, gives a vital strength for service and suffering. When you have *the word of God* in your mouths, as *the sword of the Spirit;* Eph. vi. 14, &c. *the breastplate of righteousness,* to cover your hearts, *the hope of salvation* as a helmet on your heads, and *the shield of faith* to ward off every dart; you are then best furnished to resist unto death.

But I would here chide the ignorant and the lazy christian. What will you do when ye shall be assaulted with the witty reproaches of the heathens of our age, those apostates from christianity? When they shall laugh at you for a fool, because you profess to be a believer, and they think they have reason to laugh, if you can give no reason why you believe, what will you say, when they shall tell you the gospel of Christ is but a fable, and endeavour to scoff you out of your faith? When they shall ridicule you for paying the honours of a God to a poor man, that was hanged upon a tree in Jerusalem, and hath been dead and buried seventeen hundred years ago? What will you say, when they shall ask you how you can imagine that this man was the Son of God, or the scriptures are of divine original? Will you answer as a papist does, "I believe it because the church believes it?" Or will you reply with the Turk, "I believe in Christ as the Turk doth in Mahomet, because the whole nation believes?" Or will you give the answer of a child, "I believe the Bible is the word of God, because my mother told me so?" But how unworthy is this of a person that professes to be a christian, and is grown to full years of maturity? How ridiculous is it for a man to believe, and he knows not why? A man that hath had a thousand advantages to get his faith well grounded, and to learn the reason of the hope that is in him?

Besides, how will you be able to stand in such an hour of temptation? Perhaps you will lose your faith, and all your religion. A bold jest, or a fair shew of argument, may make so deep an impression on a weak and unfurnished mind, as to give a sudden inlet to the tempter; and your soul may be filled with doubts and suspicions of christianity: Then from one degree of unbelief you may be led on to another, till you have *made shipwreck of the faith and a good conscience too.* Thus you will part with all your hopes of

immortality and heaven, for want of a well-grounded knowledge of the person in whom you profess to trust.

But further: If persecution should grow sharp, and days of torment and martyrdom return again, how would you be able to resist unto blood, and to bear the fiery trial, for the sake of a Saviour that you have not much acquaintance with? How could you hold out in this conflict till the death, if you have but little knowledge and little experience of that gospel which promiseth a crown of life? Would such ignorance as yours is endure to be plundered and banished? To be scourged and buffeted? To be fastened to the chains of a galley slave, or to die by lingering tortures? Do you think you could bear what our neighbours and brethren in France have endured upon the account of your faith, and yet have no better reason to give for it? You will make but a poor confessor or martyr, if you can say no more for christianity than a heathen can say for his national religion? If you have no more to plead in defence of the blessed Jesus than a native of Morocco hath for his prophet Mahomet; a man of Ephesus for his goddess Diana; or a citizen of Athens for his *unknown God.*

Attend, therefore, to the advice of the apostle Peter, 1 *Epistle*, chap. iii. ver. 14, 15. *But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:* And again I would put you in mind how he concludes his second epistle, and what direction he gives even to those who had some good knowledge of christianity, that you may be secured from the growing apostasy of the age: Verse 17, 18. *Ye, therefore, beloved, seeing you know these things before, beware lest ye also being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness: But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

VI. This doctrine relieves our sorrows at the death of our pious relatives,* for we know to whom they had intrusted their souls. We are in no pain or jealousy about their eternal state; for when they leave us and this world, they have parted indeed with their friends on earth, but it is to dwell with a better friend: for this is the design of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of his powerful prayer, John xvii. 24. *Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, to behold my glory.* And we should learn for the same reason to be well pleased with the time when Christ calls up to heaven those souls that he has taken care of; for he knows the properest hour when to dismiss them from flesh into the invisible world.

If they are declining in their religion, and beginning to wander away from God, we may be ready to say, "Oh that they may live till they are fully recovered again to the brightness of their former profession!" But Christ, who hath the care of them, calls them now, lest they run farther away, and fall into grosser sins; he hides them from temptations in the silent grave, and seizes their souls to himself in the wisest and kindest moment.

If they grow more holy, more delightful, and more lovely to all their friends, we are ready to say, "Now let them live long, to bring more glory to God, to please, entertain, and profit us." But the voice of Christ, to whom they had committed their souls, may say, "Now let them die, and quit the world with the fairest honour, that they may leave behind, amongst their friends and the churches, the sweetest savour of all their conversation, and the most precious memory of their names."

* This sermon was first preached on occasion of the death of a worthy member of our congregation.

Are they taken away by sudden death? They know him who has the keys of death, and they have committed the care of it to him, to determine the time and the manner, when and how they should be released from this prison of flesh, and be taken up to his own bosom. Though they may be conveyed with a sort of surprise into the unseen world, yet it is but a seizure into the arms of their best beloved, who is ready to receive and conduct them to the Father in perfect righteousness, with abounding joy.

VII. This doctrine leads us on to a joyful and entertaining prospect of the great and last day; the day when Christ shall make his faithfulness appear in all the trusts that he ever undertook; for then he shall have fulfilled them all, and shall deliver up his account to the Father. Then millions of souls, that were committed to his care in successive ages, and human bodies, an equal number, that had long lain sleeping in the grave under his eye, shall be re-united, to make complete and glorious persons; then shall all his saints at once appear, and give honour and everlasting thanks to their faithful and almighty Guardian.

"Behold he comes with clouds, and every eye shall see him! He comes in his own glory, in the glory of his Father, and with all his holy angels! Behold, he comes exalted upon a throne of judgment, where the Father hath placed him to finish his great commission, and to pass a decisive sentence upon all mankind. My faith descries him afar off: I see his day, and I rejoice to see it. He shall summon all the nations before him; and I shall appear there I trust at his right hand, among the blessed. Then shall he remember and fulfil all the kind words that he hath spoken to me on earth, by his holy writings: For in the days of my infirmity and warfare on earth, I have not been ashamed of him before men," nor will he be *ashamed of me before his Father, and his holy angels;* Matt. x. 32.

"See, O Father," will the Lord Jesus say, "*see, here am I, and the children that thou hast given me;*" Heb. ii. 13. "*While they were in the world I kept them, through thy name: Behold, there is not one of them lost;*" John xvii. 12.

"Come," will the Lord say to every humble believer, "come to my right hand, and stand there among the saints: Behold, all is safe, that thou didst once intrust to my keeping: I know thy faith, I acknowledge thy love; I will now reward all thy humble obedience with everlasting honours; and thou shalt confess I have been a kind and a faithful friend."

God the Father shall say to our Lord Jesus, "Well done, my best of servants, my Son, my first-beloved, thou hast kept all those whom I gave thee to keep, and brought them safe into my presence; they shall be thy glory, and thy eternal crown." And every saint shall, as it were, echo to the voice of the Father, and say, "My first-beloved, my Lord, and my best of friends, thou hast kept me through all the days of my infirmity and flesh, ever since I gave myself up to thy keeping, and thou hast brought me safe to thy Father's house; the glory and the crown be thine for ever. O the unknown transports of this hour! The unspeakable joy and glory of this day! Faith is even astonished at the delightful distant prospect, and longs till the Lord appear.

DISCOURSE XI.

THE ORDINARY WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.

ROM. viii. 16.

THE SPIRIT ITSELF BEARETH WITNESS WITH OUR SPIRIT, THAT WE ARE THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

THE FIRST PART.

HERE is a sacred honour and dignity conferred upon men by a patent from heaven: The patent is the scripture, or word of God, and the dignity is, that we are made his children. Here are also two distinct witnesses to this title of honour, *viz.* our own spirits, and the blessed Spirit of God: The Spirit itself witnesses with our spirits, that we are the children of the Most High. Every one that reads the text may plainly discern that, by *the Spirit itself* we must understand the Holy Ghost, or third person in the ever-blessed Trinity, who is sent to dwell and operate in the hearts of christians; as it is expressed in several of the foregoing verses. And it is as manifest, that our own spirit here signifies that principle within us, distinct from our flesh, whereby we are enabled to think, reason, compare things together, and to judge concerning them. This is sometimes called the mind, the heart, the conscience, the soul; and it is termed our spirit here in the words before us.

The Spirit of God may sometimes operate by himself alone in a very extraordinary manner upon the souls of men, and give them immediate and divine assurances of their adoption, and their interest in the love of God, as his children; and this favour was sometimes bestowed in the primitive days of christianity, when the saints were called in an uncommon manner to undertake services of uncommon difficulty. But the words of my text seem rather chiefly to refer to that more ordinary and usual testimony which the Spirit of God gives to our sonship, by assisting our own spirits to attain the knowledge of this privilege. In order to improve these words I shall endeavour,

I. To lead your thoughts on in a few propositions, towards a plain and easy notion of this ordinary or assisting witness of the Spirit of God.

II. Shew what methods the Holy Spirit generally takes in this work.

III. Propose some advices concerning it. And then,

IV. I shall give my thoughts also concerning the extraordinary witness of the Spirit.

First, I would open the way toward a plain and easy notion of this ordinary or assisting witness of the Spirit of God with our own spirits, in a few propositions:

I. God, in his word, has given us the description and the characters of his children. This is evident, and beyond dispute: many scriptures there are that evince it. He has told us what we are by nature, *viz.* children of wrath; and laid down the character of sinful men in an unregenerate state, who are called the children of the devil. He has

acquainted us with what we are by grace, *viz.* his own children, *born again*, or *born of God;* and has laid down various marks of that privilege also, that so we might distinguish between good and evil, between saints and sinners.

The marks of the children of God in scripture, are chiefly such as these:

1. They believe in Christ Jesus: *John* i. 12. To *as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the* children *of God; even to* as many as *believed in his name:* 1 John v. 1. You have the same thing expressed in other words: *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God;* Whosoever so believes him to be the Messiah, as to receive him for a Saviour from sin and hell, according to his commission to save.

2. They are such as do not willingly indulge sin, that do not make sin their practice. See 1 John iii. 9. *He that is born of God sinneth not:* He doth not drink in iniquity with greediness, as others do; he has still a settled rooted aversion in his mind, to those sinful practices into which sometimes he is drawn by the power or surprise of temptation; for he has the seed of God abiding in him, and the divine likeness and temper communicated to him by regeneration, so that he sins not with a full bent of soul, nor with his whole heart, as he loves God and seeks him, nor with constancy and perseverance; *Psalm* cxix. 2, 10, 38, 44.

3. Such as love God and keep his commandments, they are the children of God: And this you have frequently repeated in the 1st Epistle of *John.* When a principle of divine love reigns in the heart, we keep the commands of our heavenly Father with delight, and they are not a heavy task or burden to us: *His commandments are not grievous;* 1 John v. 3.

4. Justice and charity toward men, and special affection toward our fellow-christians, are further evidences of our adoption; 1 John iii. 10. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: Whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.* When our righteous and friendly conduct toward our fellow-creatures proceeds from a sense of the authority of God, and his divine compassion; when our *meekness, gentleness, goodness* to all men, and our peculiar love to the saints of God, spring from a right principle; when we love the brethren because they carry the image of God in them; these are such characters as distinguish the sons of God from the children of wrath, and the seed of the wicked one.

5. Peacemakers are entitled to this dignity: Matt. v. 9. *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God:* But he that sows discord among brethren is of the seed of the serpent.

6. Sanctified afflictions, and patience under them, is another mark of adoption; Heb. xii. 7, *If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons;* and he does this *for our profit,* verse x. *that we might be partakers of his holiness.* If the sorrows, the burdens, the reproaches, the pains, the sicknesses, and the sufferings that we sustain, either from the hands of God or men, do not draw out our angry disquieting passions, but are borne with a holy composure of spirit, looking to the hand of God as our Father; and if we find our hearts weaned from this life as from a state of sin and sorrow, and drawn nearer to heaven, it is a comfortable sign that we belong to the family of God.

7. They that gain a victory over the world, and live above the reach of the frowns and the smiles of it, they are the children of God too: The apostle John assures us of this; 1 John v. 4. *He that is born of God overcometh the world.*

8. They are the children of God that walk as Christ walked, and live as Christ lived:

They that follow the glorious example of the original and *first-begotten Son* have the mark of true children; *Rom.* viii. 29. God has *predestinated* all his children *to be conformed to the image of his Son Christ Jesus.*

I might sum up all the foregoing evidences of sonship in this general character of likeness and conformity to our Redeemer: For if we consult that text, 1 *John* v. 6. we shall find, that *the water and blood* are the two great testimonies that are given to the sonship of our Lord Jesus. *This is he that came by water and by blood.* And as he was manifested to be the Son of God by the purity of his life and the blood of martyrdom, which also was a blood of atonement, so are we manifested to be the children of God. The blood is our witness, when we by faith lay hold of the atoning blood of Jesus, and commit our guilty souls to pardoning mercy, to be accepted through that blood of his sacrifice. And when we are *sprinkled with the clean water* of sanctification, or baptized with the Holy Spirit and made holy, as Jesus is holy, then we have the witness of the water too. Thus, by the witness of the water and the blood, Jesus the first Son is evidenced, and we also appear to be children.

II. As the word of God discovers to us, and describes the characters of his children, so the Spirit of God works these heavenly dispositions in us, these happy characters of our sonship. *By nature we are the children of wrath,* the mere seed of the first Adam, and the offspring of Satan, rather than of God; in our corrupt natural state, we are led by *the prince of the power of the air; we are the children of disobedience and of death;* Eph. ii. 2. There are none of these divine marks upon us. It is the blessed Spirit that forms these filial graces in our souls, lays the foundation of these evidences in the heart with power, and makes them appear in the life with beauty and praise. Therefore the children of God are said to be *born of the Spirit;* John iii. 5, 6.

It is he that takes us out of the kingdom of Satan, the family of death and hell, and brings us into the family of God, and the kingdom of his grace. It is he that by his divine influences *translates us from darkness into the kingdom of Christ.* It is he that takes away all the wild and savage marks of an unclean beast from the soul, and gives it the disposition and the character of the sheep of Jesus. It is the blessed Spirit who, by his sanctifying and renewing work, stamps the image of God on the soul, forms the features and resemblance of the divine nature, and imprints on the heart such gracious habits and dispositions as render it like to God. Thus the child of God bears the Father's likeness; as the figures engraved on the seal are copied out on the wax. And this some have called *the seal of the Holy Spirit;* Eph. i. 13. and iv. 30. And as the Spirit of God works these divine principles of holiness in the heart, so he is said to be given to us, to dwell in us; *i. e.* to preserve those holy principles which belong to the children and heirs of God: And in this sense he may be called an *earnest of their future inheritance;* Eph. i. 14.

Blessed are your souls who have the fore-mentioned characters impressed upon you. Rejoice in your own happy state, and bless the eternal Spirit who has stamped the likeness of God upon you; who has begotten you again to a new life by the power of the word working effectually upon your hearts: who has translated you from the household of sin and Satan, and made you the children of the most high God.

Here also we may remark, that in this we bear a resemblance to Christ Jesus, *the only-begotten Son.* It was by the descent of this Spirit on the blessed virgin, and by the overshadowing power of the Most High, that the child Jesus was formed; and therefore that holy thing which was born of the virgin was called *the Son of God;* Luke i. 35.

The resemblance holds yet farther: For *the Spirit was given to dwell in Christ without measure*, to sanctify his human nature, and to work miracles: *John* iii. 34. By this Spirit of holiness he was also raised from the dead; and thus *he was declared to be the Son of God with power;* as some interpret that text; *Rom.* i. iv. He was God's *first-born* before all worlds; and it is the same Spirit that dwells in him the original Son, without measure, that is sent according to our measure, to dwell in us also: It is the same Spirit that raises us from a death in trespasses and sins to a new life: It is the same Spirit that is given to sanctify us, and to make us children.

Go on yet and compare *Rom.* viii. 9, 11, 14. with *Heb.* ii. 14. and you will find, as he was pleased in a way of condescension *to take flesh and blood upon him, because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, that he might be like them;* Heb. ii. So he is pleased to give his own Spirit to men that they may be like him also: For *he that has not the Spirit of Christ is none of his;* Rom. viii. 9. For this reason he is not ashamed to call them brethren, children of one Father; for he partook of their flesh, and they partake of his Spirit.

III. God has given to each of our spirits a power of reflecting upon our own hearts and lives, whereby we become witnesses and judges for or against ourselves: And by this power we pass a judgment both concerning our particular actions, concerning the temper of our spirits, and concerning our state toward God. This power is sometimes called conscience. It is a faculty whereby we compare our words, our thoughts, and actions, with some rule; and that rule is the law of God: And hereby we judge concerning these particular thoughts, words and actions, whether they are good or bad. But when we compare the habitual frame and temper of our spirits, as well as the transactions and conduct of our lives, with the plain description and characters of the children of God, that are given us in his word; hereby we judge of our own state, whether it be a state of sin or a state of grace.

This is that light that God has set up in men by which they should pass sentence in their own case, with regard to their own present conduct, and their future hopes. And Solomon, for this reason, calls *the spirit of man the candle of the Lord;* Prov. xx. 27. The heathens had this conscience in them, and those broken pieces of *the law that were written in their hearts, was the rule by which their consciences did either excuse or else accuse;* Rom. ii. 15. But we have a more certain rule to judge ourselves by, even the word of God, the revelation of his mind and will that he has made in the Bible. Our consciences must judge according to this rule, We are bid therefore to try, to judge, *to examine ourselves;* 2 Cor. xiii. 5. *Examine and prove yourselves.* And 1 Cor. xi. 28. *Let a man examine himself.* This self-examination is required as a necessary duty, in order to come at the knowledge of our sonship, that our spirits may be able to bear a witness that we are the children of God.

Blessed are they who upon such an inward search and examination of themselves, can find such marks of his children. Blessed are we, if our own hearts condemn us not: Then *we may assure our hearts before Jesus our judge, and have confidence at his coming;* 1 John iii. 19—21. Happy is our state if our spirits bear witness that we are the children of God by this inward and impartial reflection upon ourselves, and the comparison of our hearts with this rule of judgment.

IV. Though God has given us this power of reflecting and comparing ourselves with characters laid down in his word, yet there is need of the assisting light of his Spirit to search with our spirits, and to witness to his own work in our hearts.

We are too often ready to deceive ourselves in this matter two ways:—1. In some persons, pride and self-flattery are so prevalent that they always think better of themselves than they deserve, and are ready to pronounce themselves the children of God, without just evidence and sufficient ground. 2. Others, who are humble and sincere christians, have their spirits so depressed, either by a melancholy constitution, by a natural self-diffidence, by weakness of body, or by heavy afflictions, that they can see nothing good in themselves; they cannot read any characters of divine grace in their hearts, though grace shines visibly in their whole conversation, to the view of their fellow-christians.

On these accounts, and some others also, we stand in need of divine assistance in this work of self-examination. And therefore it is that though we are commanded to search ourselves, yet we have the examples of saints in the scripture that desire the Spirit of God to search them too. With what zeal and fervency doth holy David intreat *that God would search him.* See *Psalm* cxxxix. 23, 24. when he had been examining his own heart in the two former verses, he concludes, *Search me, O Lord, and try me.* As we cannot work grace in our own hearts, so in an hour of darkness we cannot clearly discover that grace that is there to the full satisfaction of our consciences, unless the same Spirit that wrought it, is pleased to reveal it to us by his assisting influences.

It is by observations and assistances borrowed from the sun that hour-lines are drawn on a sun-dial, and they abide there in the dark; but we cannot find what hour of the day it is unless the sun shines upon those hour-lines: So grace in the heart is wrought by the Holy Spirit, and it abides still even the darkest night of temptation, when once the Spirit of God has wrought it there, it shall never be quite lost, for the seed of God remains: But the soul cannot discern it clearly, so as to take comfort from it in an hour of darkness, unless the Spirit, like the sun, dart his beams of light into the soul, and discover his own work. Therefore a great writer of practical divinity, Mr. R. Allein, expresses it, "As the Spirit seals us by being the mark of the Lord upon us, so he witnesses by being the light of the Lord within us, whereby we come to discern the mark of the Lord upon us." As Hagar in the wilderness did not see the fountain of water though it was near her, till *God opened her eyes,* Gen. xxi. 19. so the springs of divine life and holiness which the Spirit of God has raised within our souls, are sometimes, as it were, hidden from the soul itself, till the Spirit shew it to the believer, by assisting his enquiring faculties, and shedding down a divine light. This leads me to

The *second* thing proposed: And that is to shew the method by which the Spirit generally works in this assisting testimony.

1. He doth it by stirring up the soul to a most diligent search, and making it unwearied in this toil and labour of self-examination. I call it labour and toil, for by nature we are very unwilling to be accurate and strict, and just in the search of ourselves. The Spirit of God will hold us to it when we find great aversions and disinclination in our own hearts to such a work. We, who have so much sin, are sometimes much afraid to look into the bottom of our souls, lest we should find no sincerity there: It is the Spirit of truth therefore, that excites us to diligence in these holy enquiries.

2. He gives us sometimes a fair opportunity and occasion for the exercise of some grace in a clear and distinct manner, and hereby assists the witness of our spirits. Perhaps by the discovery of the grace and glory of Christ in a sermon, he invites our faith,

our love, our holy joy to appear: By a kind providence, and some new signal mercy, he puts us in mind of thankfulness: Or if our souls have lain long in a secure careless frame, he leaves us, it may be, under some spiritual affliction, some terrible temptation, and awakens us to thoughtfulness, repentance, holy mournings, and longing desires after God. Thus the characters of adoption appear in our hearts, that before were covered over with the dust of this world, and buried under the cares or vanities of life.

3. It is the Spirit of God that inwardly assists these holy principles, and strengthens them in their exercise, when he hath given an outward and providential occasion to awaken them: For as he is the first spring of all the powers of the new creature, so he is a constant assisting principle to promote their holy exercise. He dwells in the saints for ever, and is an everlasting spring of their holiness. It is he that excites and manages the vital motions of our souls, and makes it appear by holy exercises, that we have spiritual life in us; otherwise the providential occasion and opportunity for the exercise of such a grace might be given, and pass away and be lost, while the soul itself lies sluggish, negligent, and inactive, if the Holy Spirit did not set it on work; *For we are not of ourselves sufficient even to think or do any thing truly good:* 2 Cor. iii. 5.

4. The Spirit of God sometimes assists this witnessing work by bringing some word of scripture into the mind, wherein the character of a child of God is described, agreeable to some holy disposition which we find working in our own hearts: And this makes the matter clear, plain, and evident to the conscience. Though this be not a constant method with God, yet surely the experience of many christians can subscribe to the truth of it, when they have been searching their own hearts, to find what grace is there, some proper sentence of scripture has been brought to their minds, wherein they have, as in a glass, beheld their own face, beheld the likeness of the children of God in their own souls; and then they have been constrained to pronounce with holy joy concerning themselves, "Surely I am a child of God." Nor is it at all hard to suppose that God's Holy Spirit should cast a happy sentence of his own word into our minds, or bring it to our remembrance, in order to evidence our adoption, when it is generally granted the evil spirit may have such access to our minds by the organs of the brain or the fancy, as to suggest to our thoughts profane, impure, malicious, or blasphemous speeches, or to tempt us to presumption or despair.

5. It might be added, in the last place, that the discerning faculty of the soul is enabled to act aright by the Spirit of God, and kept from all dangerous mistakes and self-deceivings in this work of examination. Hereby he makes it appear that such a principle of faith, or love, or repentance, which we find working within us, is true evangelical repentance, is sincere love, and *faith unfeigned;* and that it is indeed God's own work in the heart: And thus he puts an end to our doubtful fears about the truth of grace. These things seem to me so plain and intelligible in themselves, and so correspondent with those divine aids of the Holy Spirit which are promised to the children of God in all their serious and religious exercises, and without which we can do nothing that is truly good, that I trust it will be easily understood and readily received by those who are much conversant in transacting their most important affairs with God, according to the light of scripture.

The substance of this testimony of the Spirit to our adoption may be represented in short, after this manner: The Spirit of God in his word has described the marks and characters of his children; and, by his gracious influence, he works these holy dispositions, these characters in our hearts: God has given us a conscience, which is a faculty

of comparing ourselves with the rule of his word and judging accordingly: The Spirit of God by his power and by his providence, awakens these holy dispositions into lively exercise: He assists our enquiring and our judging faculties, helps us to compare our own souls with his word, and thus confirms our own spirits in the belief of this proposition, that we are the children of God. This is the more common and ordinary way and method, whereby God is pleased to give the comforts of adoption to his people.

It is the remark of a judicious writer on this subject, "That as on the one hand wicked men are sometimes convinced in their own consciences that they are children of wrath, and further confirmed in this persuasion by that evil spirit who labours from hence to drive and hurry them on to despair; so, on the other hand, when the hearts of believers speak peace to them, telling them that God is their Father, reconciled to them in Christ, and the Holy Spirit saith the same also, then they have *perfect peace*. That the Spirit of God may thus concur with the inward consciousness and testimony of our own spirits in so important a matter as our love to God, and his love to us, is very easy to be supposed when the apostle speaks of this concurring witness of the Spirit of God to his own consciousness, and his sincere love of his countrymen, when he says; Rom. ix. 1. *My conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost.* There is nothing in all this account of things but what is perfectly agreeable to the word of God, and to the rational actings of created minds, under the happy influences of the uncreated Spirit.

The *third* thing proposed was to give a few advices relating to this ordinary witness of the Spirit of God concurring with our spirits.

1. Satisfy not yourselves with one slight examination, but renew the work frequently, and search whether you find the same marks and evidences of adoption remaining in you or no. Do not content yourselves to run the whole course of life with one or two solemn examinations of your own hearts when God first began to work religion in you, but enquire and see whether your principles of grace abide in the same brightness, evidence, and activity as in time past. Perhaps by this means you may discern a sensible growth in grace, and you may find abundant advantage, worth all the care and labour of self-examination; or if you find decays and backslidings, it will awaken repentance and zeal toward a recovery.

2. In this searching work keep aloof from carnal self-love. When you call yourselves to an account, set yourselves before the bar of your own consciences, as before the bar of God; for conscience is a judge for God within us. Pass an impartial sentence concerning yourselves, even such as you suppose God himself would pass, if you were now summoned before his tribunal. Suffer not yourselves now to be biassed by the esteem or the fondness that we all have naturally for ourselves. The matter is too important, the enquiry too solemn and awful, for you to indulge self-flattery. It will be no profit to deceive your souls in this work, for you cannot deceive God. Come, therefore, and apply yourselves to this holy exercise, with an unbiassed design to pronounce concerning yourselves whatever you find the word of God pronounces concerning you.

3. Trust not merely to your own spirits, without earnest prayer for the assistance of the Spirit of God; Jer. xvii. 9. *The heart is deceitful above all things:—Who can know it?* Therefore David prays importunately, as we have before observed, that God would *search him and try him;* Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24. Beg of the Lord that he would not suffer you to be deceived, when you set about this searching work; for it is a matter of most high concern. A mistake here is dangerous, and it may be for ever fatal.

4. When you find any character of adoption made to appear with strong evidence upon your souls, be not utterly discouraged though you do not find all the characters of grace there. It is true indeed, where there is a new nature and a divine principle wrought in the heart, there are the seeds of every holy disposition; but they do not all arise to an equal strength, nor stand forth and shine with equal evidence. The Spirit of God may sometimes witness with your spirits, though but one mark of adoption appear plainly, while others are not so easily discovered. A single bough of the tree of life has upheld souls from drowning in despair, when they could but lay hold of that one bough. Many a christian, under great difficulties, inward tumults, doubts, and darknesses of spirit, have been enabled to hold on their way by living upon some one plain scripture, and finding the sense of it transcribed into their own hearts. Some one evidence of true faith, or holy love, of repentance, or heavenly-mindedness, has been set in such a divine light before them, that they could not well mistake; and this has borne up their hope in an hour of temptation. But I must add,

5. Though you ought to bless God for any mark of his children in your hearts, yet you ought not to content yourself with one mark, since the scripture has given us many. The faculties of our natures are various, and they have their various operations: The passions or affections of our souls are many, and some of them are frequently in exercise: Now all the passions and faculties of nature, with all their operations, should be conformable to the rule of the word of God; and when it is so, there appears a variety of marks of the children of God upon us, even as many as there are powers or passions belonging to our souls. Whether it be hatred, it is hatred to sin, and to all that displeases God: If it be delight, it is a delight in heavenly things, and in holy ordinances: If it be desire, it is a desire after God, after a sense of his love, a greater acquaintance with him, a more exact conformity to him, and a breathing after the heavenly state, where we shall never sin against him. Thus since the several powers and principles in our nature being sanctified, yield us several distinct evidences of adoption, let us not be contented with one of them, but press forward toward a stronger hope of our sonship. Let us labour and pray that all the springs of action within us being sanctified by the Holy Spirit, may yield the fruits of holiness, may shine bright in a way of evidence, and raise our hope to full assurance.

6. When you have found any comfortable and solid hopes of your adoption, by *the Holy Spirit witnessing* in this rational way *with your spirits, that you are the children of God*, walk in the cheerful sense of it continually; go on in the way of holiness, *rejoicing in the Lord.* This was one end why Christ has given us the characters of his disciples in scripture, that when we find them in our own hearts we might rejoice. This was part of the design of his farewel sermon to his apostles, wherein some of these characters are described. See John xv. 11. *These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.* The blessed Spirit, in the same discourse, is promised as a *Comforter*, and we ought to *walk in the light* of his consolations. It is the most evangelical and the most constraining method of his grace, when he carries on his sanctifying work by the influence of peace and joy; and it is one of the glories of a christian, that *the joy of the Lord is his strength, to fulfil all* the duties of *righteousness.*

DISCOURSE XII.

THE EXTRAORDINARY WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.

ROM. viii. 16.

THE SPIRIT ITSELF BEARETH WITNESS WITH OUR SPIRIT, THAT WE ARE THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

THE SECOND PART.

IT is great and divine condescension, that the blessed God should ever take any of the children of wrath, and make them the children of his love: But he condescends yet farther, when he sends down his own Spirit to give us notice of our adoption, and to acquaint us with our high and holy privilege. The common and ordinary method whereby the Spirit of God bears witness that we are his children, is by drawing out our own spirits to search and enquire into the filial and holy dispositions which he himself has wrought in our hearts, and by assisting our consciences in this enquiry. Thus by his gentle, easy, and insensible influences upon our souls, he leads us on in a rational manner to infer and conclude, that we are born of God, because we find the image of God impressed on us, and those divine qualities wrought in us, which belong only to his children. This has been the subject of the foregoing discourse.

I proceed now to consider the extraordinary witness of the Holy Spirit, when in a more immediate* and more sensible manner he raises in the hearts of some of his favourites a powerful and a pleasant sense of their interest in the love of God.

This extraordinary witness may be distinguished into two kinds.

1. It may imply some very uncommon and powerful confirmation of the ordinary and rational witness, by most sensible impressions of divine love on the heart, by which it is raised to holy raptures, to heavenly joy and assurance. Perhaps the apostle Peter may have some respect to this, 1 *Peter* i. 8. where, speaking of Christ, he adds, *whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.* Here it is supposed in the text, that the persons to whom he writes were conscious of their own faith in an unseen Saviour, and their love to him; and thence they could infer that they were accepted of God: But without some peculiar and more uncommon influences of the Holy Spirit, they could hardly be said to arise to such *joy* as was *unspeakable and full of glory, or glorified joy,* as the Greek text expresses it, χαρα δεδοξασμενη, a-kin to that which the saints possess in the glorified state.

2. There is yet another sort of extraordinary witness of the Spirit; and that is, when in an immediate and powerful manner the Holy Spirit impresses the soul with an assurance of divine love, and gives the heart of a saint such a full discovery of his adoption or interest in the favour of God, without the more slow and argumentative method of

* By the word immediate here, I do not mean without ordinances, such as prayer, meditation, &c. but rather sudden and speedy.

comparing the dispositions of their souls with some special characters of the children of God in scripture. The Spirit of God may witness in an extraordinary manner to our adoption, by an inward experimental sense of *the love of God shed abroad in the heart*, assuring some of his favourites that they are the sons or daughters of God, without any particular examination of the heart at that time, or any present reflections on the characters of adoption described in the Bible.

I confess, the several acts of the mind of man, even the reasoning and argumentative acts of the soul, are so quick and sudden, and the sensible joy that may arise from them follows in so swift and close a succession, that it is sometimes very hard to distinguish and define the bounds and limits of the several actions, perceptions, and impressions on the mind. On this account, I shall not be solicitous to keep up the distinction between these two kinds of the extraordinary witness of the Spirit, but shall only speak of them in general, as distinguished from the ordinary witness of the Spirit, by the more immediate sensations of divine love, that are impressed through the peculiar favour of God on the souls of some of his children.

I am very sensible that, in our present age, the Spirit of God is so much withdrawn from the christian church in all his operations, that a man exposes himself to the censure of wild enthusiasm, and a heated fancy, if he ventures to discourse at all on such a theme as this: But as I am persuaded these things were frequent matter of christian experience in the primitive days of the gospel, and in scenes of sharp persecution, so I am satisfied that God has not utterly withheld his divine favours of this kind from his churches and his children for sixteen hundred years together; and I hope I shall make it appear, that a supposition of this extraordinary witness of the Spirit may be maintained, without giving a loose to all the roving dreams of a distempered brain, or to the bold presumptions of weak and conceited men, or false and deceitful impostors. The method of my discourse is this,

I. I will offer some very probable proofs that there has been, and is, such a thing as the extraordinary witness of the Spirit of God.

II. I shall mention a few of the special seasons or occasions of such a divine favour.

III. Shew how it may be distinguished from delusions of Satan, and from the mere ferments and vivacity of animal nature, or a disordered fancy.

IV. Represent some other characters of it, and shew wherein it differs from the ordinary witness of the Spirit. And then,

V. Conclude with a few directions relating to it.

I. Let me offer some proofs that there is such an extraordinary witness of the Spirit.

Now that this is not the language of wild enthusiasm, or a mere fantastic notion of the brain, will appear from these few considerations:

I. The great God, the Father of spirits, can reveal a truth to the mind of his creature, with such life, and power, and evidence, that the mind cannot dissent from it, or refuse to believe it; the overpowering light may be so divine and convincing, that the creature may be fully and justly persuaded it is a divine truth. Those who believe the prophets and apostles divinely inspired, can have no reasonable doubt about this proposition.

II. It has pleased the great and blessed God to give such immediate assurance of his own love to some of his favourites of old, by visions and voices, and the message of angels, and by inward impressions on their minds by his own Spirit. Thus Abraham

was assured that God was his God, and would be *his exceeding great reward;* Gen. xv. 1. Thus concerning Moses, it was made known that he was the *friend of God;* Exod. xxxiii. 11. Thus Daniel was often informed, that he was a *man greatly beloved;* Dan. ix. 23. and x. 11, 19. Mary Magdalene, and some others, who conversed with Christ when he was here on earth, had a particular assurance that their sins were forgiven them. Paul was assured that he was a *chosen vessel.* And indeed, all the apostles had sufficient evidence of their acceptance with God, and their interest in the love of Christ, by the extraordinary communications of the Holy Ghost. It is the opinion of a late ingenious writer, that not only the apostles themselves, but even all the primitive christians that were truly converted by their ministry, received these extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost in some degree; which did not only witness to the christian religion, but to the comfort of those who had it, with the assurance of God's pardon and acceptance. See Miscellanea Sacra, Essay I. p. 117, 126, 134.

III. There is no evidence from reason or scripture, that all such immediate divine favours are ceased; and though there is not the same occasion for the frequency of them as there was in the beginning of christianity, yet the Spirit of God is a free and unconfined agent; and since it is plain from scripture, that he doth still *dwell in his people,* and carry on his divine work among the churches of Christ in all ages, to the end of the world, why may he not sometimes discover his power and grace in an extraordinary manner, above and beyond his ordinary and usual operations?

IV. Some special seasons and occasions may arise, and indeed have arisen, wherein the blessed Spirit of God has thought it proper vastly to exceed the measures and rules of his ordinary operations, in the exercise of his offices of illumination and sanctification? And why may it not be allowed in his consolations also?

1. There may be some reason for extraordinary acts of his illumination; as when persons are not able to read the holy scriptures, or when the Bible is withheld from them, and when they have enjoyed but very poor and insufficient ministrations of the gospel; the Blessed Spirit may sometimes shine into humble souls with some uncommon rays of divine truth; and they may enjoy more sensible teachings of the Holy Spirit: Or sometimes a person of low parts, and weak understanding, may have been illuminated in the knowledge of some scriptural doctrine, beyond what the mere exercises of their own feeble reason upon scripture would have attained to in so short a time: And perhaps some christians of better capacities may have enjoyed this favour also. Luther, that extraordinary servant of God in the reformation, is said to have oftentimes learned more of the gospel on his knees in prayer, than in his laborious studies.

2. There may be, and there have been, instances of an extraordinary work of sanctification. To what glorious degrees of piety, virtue, and true holiness, have some persons been raised in a very short time? A most astonishing change has been wrought in their souls, and a swift preparation for heaven, beyond what appears in the ordinary work of the Spirit, by the rational or persuasive influence of outward ordinances. And since the Spirit of God appears sometimes, for the honour of his own grace, to be an extraordinary enlightener and sanctifier, why may he not be an extraordinary comforter also?

V. If we can credit the accounts which have been given by holy men in later ages, and some of which are recorded in the memoirs of their lives, we must confess that there

have been instances and experiences of most sublime and extraordinary consolations of the Blessed Spirit bestowed on them; such as, upon the most rational survey of things, according to scripture, we cannot but conclude to have been truly divine.

It would take up many whole pages to cite such instances as we find upon record, in the lives of particular persons. Many such may be found in the late Mr. Fleming's fulfilling of the scriptures, especially in Scotland. I shall mention one only, and it shall be a most incontested example in our land, in England, even in our own day; the example of a person whose solid sense, whose deep sagacity, whose sedate judgment, and the superior excellence of his reasoning powers, leave no room to charge him with vain and delusive raptures of a heated imagination. The name is the late venerable Mr. John Howe. The name commands respect, and confirms the narrative. He wrote the following paragraphs in the blank leaf of his own Bible:

"*December* 26, 1689. After that I had long, seriously, and repeatedly thought with myself, that, besides a full and undoubted assent to the objects of faith, a vivifying savoury taste and relish of them was also necessary, that with stronger force, and more powerful energy, they might penetrate into the most inward centre of my heart, and there being most deeply fixed and rooted, govern my life; and that there could be no other sure ground whereon to conclude and pass a sound judgment on my good estate godward; and after I had, in my course of preaching, been largely insisting on 2 Cor. i. 12. *This is my rejoicing, the testimony of a good conscience*, &c. this very morning I awoke out of a most ravishing and delightful dream, that a wonderful and copious stream of celestial rays, from the lofty throne of the divine Majesty, did seem to dart into my open and expanded breast. I have often since, with great complacency, reflected on that very signal pledge of special divine favour, vouchsafed to me on that noted memorable day; and have, with repeated fresh pleasure, tasted the delights thereof."

"But what of the same kind I sensibly felt through the admirable bounty of my God, and the most pleasant comforting influence of the Holy Spirit, on October 22, 1704, far surpassed the most expressive words my thoughts can suggest. I then experienced an inexpressibly pleasant melting of heart, tears gushing out of mine eyes for joy that God should *shed abroad his love* abundantly through the hearts of men; and that for this very purpose mine own heart should be so signally possessed of and by his Blessed Spirit; *Rom.* v. 5." Besides this instance of so sedate, so rational, and so judicious a person, there have been many others of our pious fathers in England, but especially, as I said before, in the church of Scotland, have enjoyed such divine visits, and given very sensible evidence that the Holy Spirit is not utterly withdrawn from men, even as to his extraordinary influences.

If any thing could be added to this testimony of Mr. Howe, it should be the instance of Mr. Flavel, the famous practical divine in the west of England, who, in his treatise of the Soul of Man, gives us this account of himself, but with his name concealed: "That, in a journey on horseback, he fell into a divine meditation, wherein he had such tokens of the love of God, and his interest in the divine favour manifested to him, that greatly surpassed all the rational and inferential evidences that ever he had; though he was known to be a close walker with God, and an eminent saint, and a lively preacher of the blessed gospel of Christ."

VI. There have been several learned and judicious divines, who have declared their firm belief of such extraordinary manifestations and witnessings of the Blessed Spirit;

which belief has risen from their acquaintance with the scriptures, and their observations of the dealings of God with the spirits of his people, in some uncommon cases, though they have not professed any such experiences of their own. So the worthy and pious Mr. Caryll, on *Job* x. The Spirit brings in the witness of the water, and the blood, which is his mediate work. But besides and above these, he sometimes gives a distinct witness of his own, which is his immediate work; and is, in a way of peculiarity and transcendency, called the witness of the Spirit.

The learned and venerable Dr. Owen, in his Treatise of Communion with God, page 293, saith, "There are two ways whereby the Spirit worketh this joy in the heart of believers.

"1. He doth it immediately by himself, without the consideration of any other acts or works of his, or the interposition of any reasonings, or deductions, and conclusions. This does not arise from our reflex consideration of the love of God, but rather gives occasion thereunto. He so sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts, and fills them with gladness by an immediate act and operation. Of this joy there is no account to be given, but that the Spirit worketh it when and how he will: He secretly infuseth and distils it into the soul, prevailing against all fears and sorrows, filling it with gladness, exultations, and sometimes with unspeakable raptures of the mind." To this the Doctor adds,

"2. The Spirit works this joy also mediately by his other works towards us, &c. These are after the common or ordinary manner." That great and evangelical divine, Dr. Goodwin, in Vol. IV. Part II. pages 95, 96, declares, "That besides the testimony of the water and the blood, that is, faith in the death of Christ, and sanctification, there is a third testimony, and that is, the Holy Ghost himself, which is immediate; that is, though it backs and confirms what the other two said, yet it quotes them not, builds not his testimony on them, but raises the heart to see its adoption and sonship, by an immediate discovery of God's mind and love." And a little after he adds, "This witness is not a testimony fetched out of a man's self, or the common work of the Spirit in man, as the others were, but he speaks from himself: As when the broad seal is put to by a king, he writes *teste meipso;* so doth the Spirit speak in the language of a king, *teste meipso*, witness myself; and receives and borrows no witness from what is in us, but makes his own abundantly satisfy."

The late pious and judicious expositor of scripture, Mr. Samuel Clark, has written in the defence of this extraordinary witness of the Spirit, and describes it thus: "When the Spirit of God, without consideration of, or reflecting upon, any of those gracious qualifications he has formerly wrought in the soul, does, by his own immediate power, imprint this persuasion upon the heart, Thou art a child of God; and by an inward and secret, yet powerful voice, doth say to the soul, Thou art a believer, thy sins are pardoned, or to that purpose; and so satisfies the soul concerning its state and condition."

I proceed in the *second* place, to consider the special seasons and occasions wherein such favours have been bestowed on men.

1. The Spirit of God has, in a more immediate manner, made extraordinary impressions of the love of God on the soul, when persons have been called to great and difficult services in the church, or to uncommon sufferings for the sake of Christ.

St. Paul was in labours more abundant, and in sufferings above measure, beyond the rest of the apostles: he had need of eminent support: He was assured by a vision, that he was a chosen vessel: He was taken into heaven beforehand, and had a sight and taste of unseen future glories, to encourage his zeal and patience; 2 *Cor.* xii. And if we read the history of the martyrs, even in later as well as in ancient times, we can hardly forbear to believe this truth, when they have exulted under a sense of divine love, in the midst of racks and flames.

2. When the temptations of some humble souls have been extraordinary, and their afflictions above measure, pressing and overwhelming; when the hurry and tumult of their spirits hath not suffered them to recollect, in a calm and rational way, the evidences of their adoption, the Spirit of God may see fit to give a saint such a divine cordial to keep him from sinking. When a christian has been long contesting with doubts and darknesses, and been oppressed with many fears, the Blessed Spirit has sometimes let a sudden light into the heart, and with or without some word of scripture, has given surprising consolation. Mr. S. Clark tells us of a minister, who having been under a spirit of bondage many years, and now even ready to die in that condition, when *Rom.* viii. was begun to be read to him, a little before his last gasp, stopping at verse 1. *There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit:* "Stay," said he, "I never saw so much in those words in all my days, though I have read them often, as I see now." This seems to be an instance of the sudden and extraordinary influence of the Holy Spirit in his enlightening grace, as well as his witnessing and comforting power. This has been the case of some holy souls in their dying hours, or when just departing from the body, they have, as it were, entered into the world of sight before they have left this world of sense, and flesh, and blood; or rather, heaven itself hath entered into their spirits.

3. When christians of the first rank of piety have been warmly engaged in most lively acts of devotion, in fervent and holy prayer, and they have been brought near to heaven in the frame of their spirits, they have had a divine foretaste of the joys of the upper world, and an assurance given them of their own interest therein. Daniel had been engaged in fervent and zealous intercession for the church of God, when a heavenly messenger was sent to acquaint him, that he was *a man greatly beloved;* Dan. ix. 23. Or,

4. Perhaps the Spirit of God may think it necessary to uphold some poor weak christians of the lowest rank of understanding, by some immediate impressions of the love of God, when he sees that their love to God is great and sincere; but they are so unskilled in the exercises of their rational powers, that they hardly know how to compare their hearts with the scripture, and pass a determinate judgment on themselves. Such weak creatures, it may be, could never come to any settled hope or peace, without such divine condescensions; and especially if they are under some special temptation, which gives a confusion or darkness to their thoughts.

Thomas was but a weak believer; he knew not how to build his faith of a risen Saviour on what Christ himself had foretold, or on the testimony of his brethren, which were sufficiently just and rational foundations for his faith: Therefore, in great condescension to his weakness, Christ appeared to him, and shewed him the print of the nails in his hands, and the wound of the spear in his side: Upon which discovery, Thomas cries out with joy, *My Lord, and my God!* It is possible, that other occasions may arise in the course of divine providence, wherein the great and gracious God may see it

necessary to bestow such peculiar and extraordinary favours on some of his people; but there seems to have been sufficient evidence already given, that some of the wise and the learned, as well as some of the weaker rank of christians, have had heavenly experience of this uncommon witness of the Spirit.

The third thing I proposed, was to shew how these extraordinary favours of heaven may be distinguished from the delusions of Satan, and from the mere ferments and fits of vivacity in animal nature, or a disordered fancy.

It has been said indeed, though perhaps too rashly, that they who go about to assert an immediate testimony, will never secure the soul from delusion: Satan will soon find artifices to counterfeit this testimony, and bear witness in the Spirit's stead; and when we think we have the Spirit of Truth to assure us, we shall have the father of lies to deceive us. But if christians are careful and watchful in this matter, there are signs whereby the testimony of the Spirit may be distinguished from his delusions.

Some divines have supposed this testimony of the Spirit to be known as the sun is, by its own light; and a man who hath seen the sun, can never mistake the moon for it; the very glory of the sun manifests itself, and convinces every beholder. And perhaps in the ancient inspiration of the prophets, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the days of the apostles, there was a divine self-distinguishing light that accompanied these heavenly favours, which we know not how to judge of at this distance of time; we who never have experienced what divine inspiration is. But the surest way of our discerning the extraordinary witnessings or joys of the Holy Spirit, is by the effects; which are such as these.

I. It fills the soul with great degrees of humility and self-abasement, under a sense of its own vileness, guilt, and unworthiness; as holy Job, *when he saw God in* some more uncommon manifestations of *his power and glory, he abhorred himself in dust and ashes;* Job xlii. 4, 5. So Isaiah, when he had beheld the Lord sitting upon a *throne, high, and lifted up, Wo is me,* saith he—*I am a man of unclean lips;* Isaiah vi. 1—5. But vain delusions puff up the soul with a high conceit of itself; as Simon Magus, when, by the power of the devil, he performed some strange feats, *he gave out that he was some great person;* Acts viii. 9, 10. Many other instances of the like kind might be produced out of the histories of the christian church.

II. By this testimony of the Spirit the soul is led to a more sensible dependance on divine grace, having an inward and effectual conviction how dark and weak it is in itself, and how powerful is the grace of God, and the operation of the Spirit; it makes the soul run to the protection and succour of almighty grace; whereas vain delusions of the fancy, or temptations of the devil, rather lead the soul away from divine grace, and incline it to a sort of self-sufficiency and dependance upon its own attainments, its own light, and its own strength.

III. The witness of the Spirit does more establish the soul in the great doctrines of the gospel, and particularly in faith on Christ Jesus. Many of these immediate testimonies of old were given to the primitive christians with this design, to confirm them in the doctrines of grace, and in the faith of Christ Jesus. When St. Paul was transported into *the third heaven,* 2 Cor. xii. and had doubtless an uncommon manifestation of the love of God; as soon as the next danger and trial appeared, he besought the Lord importunately, and could not be satisfied till he received this answer from Christ, *My grace is sufficient for thee;* 2 Cor. xii. 9. He was weak in himself, but strong in Christ. But;

on the other hand, it has been evident too often, when the devil has endeavoured to delude weak creatures in this respect, he has drawn them off from Christ, or filled their imaginations with some strange errors, and led them away into false and foolish opinions, contrary to the doctrines of the gospel. The Blessed Spirit will perform his office when he becomes *a Comforter;* he will be an advocate for Christ, for so the word *paracletos* also signifies; *he will take of the things of Christ, and shew them to the soul; he will guide his people into the same truths to* which he witnessed so gloriously in the primitive times; *and will confirm believers in the faith of the holy scriptures;* John xvi. 13, 14.

IV. The witness of the Spirit draws out the heart to some special degrees of love to God, and engages it in warm and lively thanksgivings for such divine and undeserved favours: The soul admires the rich grace and goodness of God in Christ Jesus. Thence will arise an utter aversion to all sin, a hatred of every thing that is displeasing to God, a powerful sense of indwelling corruption, a watchful care to please God in every thing, and to make some humble returns of love for such inestimable favours and divine manifestations; whereas the warm presumptions of fancy, or the delusions of the devil, leave the soul in a more careless and unholy frame; or, at least, they are oftentimes attended, or quickly followed, by some powerful temptation to gross iniquity; which the deluded soul too often and too easily complies with: And there have been many instances, wherein persons, under the power of vain delusions from the devil, have been drawn away to the practice of various sorts of crimes, and particularly to foul and scandalous sins.

In the last place, I might add also, in general, that though the Spirit of God may witness in an extraordinary manner to our adoption, when the soul cannot plainly see, or does not actually and plainly recollect the characters of adoption in itself; yet it never leaves the soul without awakening the exercise of such graces as are indeed the sure marks and evidences of the children of God: Where the Spirit comes, it will bring some of its own fruits with it in a sensible manner. Now the *fruits of the Spirit* are *love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance;* Gal. v. 22. If we are comforted by the Spirit, we shall *crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts,* and endeavour to walk and live as becomes the sons and daughters of such a Father as God is.

Upon the whole I conclude, that it does not seem to be agreeable to the wisdom and providence of God, in the government of the world, to suffer the devil so exactly to counterfeit the works of his own Spirit, as to leave no marks or evidences whereby to distinguish them from the impostures of Satan. Truth and holiness are the objects of the devil's hatred; and though he may *transform himself,* in some particulars, *into an angel of light,* yet he brings along with him some peculiar evil badge, whereby he may be known or distinguished: And if christians will be sincere and honest, watchful and diligent, to examine not only the present impressions, but the succeeding effects of such sort of assurances of their adoption, together with earnest prayer to be kept from all delusions, I can hardly think that God will suffer his own people to be imposed upon in a matter of so sacred importance.

The fourth thing I proposed, was to mention briefly some characters of this extraordinary witness of the Spirit, wherein it differs from the ordinary witness.

1. The extraordinary testimony of our adoption is a more sensible and strong impression upon the soul; which seems to be distinguished in itself from the more slow, suc-

cessive, and rational operations of the human faculties. The spirit of a christian searching out his own interest in the love of God, exercises his reasoning powers, lays down these propositions: He that believes in Christ, or he that loveth God, is a child of God. Again, I believe in Christ, or I love God: And then it infers this conclusion; therefore I am one of his children. Now the Spirit of God, in his ordinary and usual influences, does so gently, so secretly, and in such a con-natural manner, assist these operations of the soul, that it seems to be all our own work; and the influences of the Spirit are seldom sensibly distinguished from the operations of our own faculties; and we learn, that we have the assistance of the Holy Spirit herein, rather by the doctrine of scripture, and by its sanctifying effects, than by any powerful sensations of a superior influence on our souls: But in the extraordinary witness the case is otherwise; for the superior and external influence appears strong and sensible. The Holy Spirit impresses the conclusion, or the assurance of our adoption, with power upon the soul, without any successive deduction of it from any foregoing propositions, sets it in a bright light, and persuades the soul to believe it.

2. This extraordinary witness is usually short and sudden, the other is more durable; this is only a cordial to encourage us in an hour of danger, or support us in a fainting season; the other is our common food, and our daily refreshment. It has been said of this favour, it is *rara hora, brevis mora:* A visit seldom bestowed, and of short continuance.

3. The ordinary witness of the Spirit of God with our spirits, proving our regeneration and adoption in a rational way, may in some measure be made out to others; but the extraordinary witness of the Spirit is like the *white stone* of absolution, and the *new name written in it;* Rev. ii. 17. *which none knows but he that receives it.* It is like *hidden manna*, with which God, at special seasons, may feed his children in secret.

4. The extraordinary witness of the Spirit fills the soul with great and exceeding joy, and brings it, as it were, within the confines of heaven: It is *joy unspeakable, and glorified*, as the apostle Peter calls it; 1 *Peter* i. 8. The other maintains the soul in such a degree of peace, comfort, and well-grounded hope, as carries the christian onward through the difficulties and duties of life, though without such raptures of inward joy. There is an unknown sensation of heavenly light and love, which runs through the spirit of a christian, under such extraordinary assurances of divine love; and it has been with a saint at such a time, as it was with Peter in the mount, when he said, *Lord, it is good for us to be here;* Matt. xvii. 4. When he was overwhelmed with revelation and pleasure, such a soul has felt more than feeble nature was able to bear, and has cried out, "It is enough, Lord; or, it is too much for a state of flesh and blood; Lord, either withhold thy comforts, or enlarge the vessel; for I cannot bear these joys."

5. This extraordinary witness of the Spirit doth not belong to every saint. Many a christian, it may be, passes the whole course of his life, and practises a regular faith and holiness for many years, without this excess of joy, this assurance of God's love. Believers are generally led on in a rational way of evidence and hope; and walking in the paths of holiness, having good hope through grace, hold fast an humble confidence unto the end. The extraordinary witness is exceeding rare and uncommon, at least in our days.

I proceed now to finish this discourse, by offering to your thoughts a few advices concerning these witnessings of the Spirit of God, both in his ordinary and extraordinary ways.

1. Though you have never felt any such immediate influences of the Spirit of God, giving you an extraordinary assurance of your interest in his love, yet have a care of ridiculing and reproaching these peculiar and uncommon operations of the Holy Spirit: Take heed of pronouncing them all at once, the delusions of the devil, the visions of a heated fancy, or vain and idle dreams. It is certain that God has bestowed some such favours on men in the primitive days of christianity. It is certain also, that there is no place of scripture that declares, that these influences are utterly ceased, or that God will bestow no more such divine favours. It is certain yet further, that wise, and judicious, and holy men, have had very extraordinary impressions of this kind made on their souls, so that they were almost constrained to believe that they were divine; and the effects of these impressions have been holy and glorious: We should set a guard therefore on our hearts and our tongues, lest we cast a reproach and scandal on such sacred appearances, which the Spirit of God will hereafter acknowledge to have been his own work.

2. Let not humble christians, who walk with God according to the ordinary methods of his grace, be discouraged, though they have never found this extraordinary witness of the Spirit, nor tasted of these peculiar favours. Value the evident marks and characters of the children of God, wrought in your hearts, more than ecstasies of joy and pleasure. Value mortification to sin more than raptures; for mortification is a certain sign that the Spirit of God dwells in us, and that we are heirs of life; Rom. viii. 13. *If you by the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live.* Heaven is the place of complete joy; heaven is the state where sight and sense shall be exercised; but we are here ordained to *live by faith;* 2 Cor. v. 7. We may have the assisting presence of *the Spirit of adoption*, and by that Spirit may say unto God, *Abba*, *Father*, without the extraordinary witnessing of that good Spirit.

3. Dare not believe any sudden raptures to proceed from this extraordinary testimony of the Holy Spirit, unless you find some considerable measure of those sanctifying effects of them which I have described; I have granted, that in particular seasons of trial, when the natural spirits sink and fail, and temptations are exceeding strong, God may give this immediate testimony, on purpose to bear up the soul from sinking; yet we should not dare to trust such sort of vehement impressions, and pronounce them divine, if we neither find any of the plain scriptural marks of the children of God upon us, before or after these impressions. There is great danger of depending upon such raptures, if they leave no evident and lasting effects of sanctification behind them. Where the Spirit shines with such a divine light, he will warm the heart with uncommon love, and the soul must be conscious of some such rational evidence of adoption, such a love to God in the heart, as will effectually prove that God has first loved us. Perhaps this is one reason why some christians fall under so many doubts and fears, because they live more upon their inward sensations of joy, their transports of pleasure in religion, which they call the extraordinary witness of the Spirit, than they do upon the characters of the children of God, which should be written in their hearts, and by which they should endeavour to search out and to evidence their interest in the favour of God.

4. Let every believer walk humbly before God, in all the paths of holiness. Take heed, lest at any time you resist the Blessed Spirit in his sanctifying influences, lest he withdraw your comforts of every kind. Be not deceived, for the Spirit of God will not be trifled with. If you sow to the flesh, after you have received any witnessings of the Spirit, you may expect to reap desertions, sorrow, pains, and long mourning. Keep a

conscience tender, and afraid of every sin; *grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption;* Eph. iv. 30.

5. Wait on God in all his holy ordinances, and wait for the manifestations of his love. It is in a regular attendance on the public and private duties of religion, that we may hope to meet with the witnessing Spirit; there the principles of grace are wont to be awakened, and called forth into lively exercise; and where your love to God your Father, and to Jesus your Saviour, is excited, and your souls exert themselves as becomes the children of God, you have most reason to expect the presence of the Holy Spirit, to bear witness to your adoption, and to your interests in his love. He will never bestow consolations of an ordinary or extraordinary kind, where there is a wilful neglect of the duties he has prescribed. Frequent the services of his *holy temple;* the outgoings of God our King are in his sanctuary. His power and glory, his grace and kindness, are made visible in his house. There has he promised his own presence; and where his presence is, he often brings with him the witnessing Spirit.

AN ESSAY

ON THE

POWERS AND CONTESTS OF FLESH AND SPIRIT.

IT is agreed by all the more sober and thinking part of the world, that man is a compounded creature; and it is made evident from this plain and easy observation, viz. that he puts forth hourly such different kinds of action, as one simple being could never perform. Flesh and spirit are the two ingredients that go to the composition; yet they keep their own natures still distinct, unmingled, and unconfounded. By the flesh we eat, drink, walk, and sleep, and are akin to brute animals; by the spirit we think, know, and choose, and hold kindred with angels. It appears to every careful observer, that each of these parts of the man have their particular and distinct natures, qualities, and operations.

The flesh, or body, includes in it the limbs, blood, and breath, with all the grosser and finer materials, solid or fluid; that make up the animal; it has many inward ferments and appetites of its own; it has several visible, as well as hidden motions; and it receives various impressions, made by outward objects of sense, which are proper to itself, and in which the spirit has no share. On the other hand, the soul or spirit includes the understanding and will, which are its chief powers: It has its thoughts and conceptions, its judgments and reasonings, its acts of choice, aversion, and desire, in great variety; which are peculiarly its own, and belong not to the flesh.

But while we dwell in this present world, there is such a near and special union between soul and body, that there are very few operations or affections of the mind, which do not receive a sensible turn or influence from the qualities and ferments, the impressions, powers, and passions, of flesh and blood.

Sometimes these animal motions attend or follow the acts or exercises of the mind, and yet even then they increase them in many cases: So when the soul is ashamed, the blood flushes in the face, and the shame is doubled; when the spirit is angry, the cheeks kindle, or grow pale, and the inward wrath burns fiercer. So in a fit of fear, the blood retires, the flesh trembles, the natural spirits flutter, or sink into faintness, and the soul is more terrified and overwhelmed. At other times these inward ferments of the juices of the body are entirely beforehand with the soul; these motions or impressions of the flesh, and sense, and animal nature, may first awaken, and then maintain the anger, or fear, or love, or other affections of the mind.

Thus most of the actions of man in this present state are of a mixed nature, wherein both flesh and spirit concur, and each perform their several parts; though in such a manner, that, in many cases, it is hard to say how far the flesh and how far the spirit have their distinct shares of influence. Yet there is one excellent and unfailing rule to judge of this matter, if we could but always apply it right; and that is, whatsoever knowledge, consent, or choice, is in any action, belongs to the mind; and what implies mere matter, shape, or proper motion, must be attributed to the body.

These appetites and affections of human nature, which are the mingled operations of flesh and spirit, are either lawful, sacred, or sinful; and they are properly and formally so called, partly according to the different objects of them, and partly according to their various degrees, or some other circumstances of time or place, that may attend

them; as will be made evident by such instances as these: Thus it will appear that the same action or passion may be determined to be lawful, sacred, or sinful, if it be exercised toward different objects, or in different degrees. Thus it is lawful to be hungry and thirsty, and to desire proper food, bread and wine; and to desire, with faith and holy affections, to eat the bread and drink the wine at the Lord's-supper is a sacred action. But to covet that meat or drink, that bread, or that wine, which belongs to another man, is sinful; for it is a violation of the tenth command, and becomes a transgression. So to fear the great God, or to love him, is a sacred affection. To fear a robber or a roaring lion, or to love my house, or my servant, are very lawful affections: But if my love or my fear of any creature exceeds my fear or my love of God my Creator, it becomes hereby sinful. It is lawful, or rather it is religious and holy, to be angry, to hate, and to be ashamed, when sin is the object of these passions; but to be ashamed of virtue and religion, where I am called to profess them, or to hate my neighbour, or even mine enemy, or to be angry without a cause, or above a proper degree, are all criminal passions, and render a man guilty before God.

The mere motions and ferments of flesh and blood, or whatsoever share mere animal nature has in these actions or affections of the man, can have no moral good or evil in them, considered apart from the soul; nor are they properly called lawful or sinful in themselves; for they are the pure operations of brutal matter, till the soul or the will indulges them, or approves them, commands them, or complies with them. Yet if the objects of these fleshly motions be forbidden by the laws of God, or if the degree be excessive, or the time or place unlawful, then these motions and ferments of the flesh may be called sinful; not formally in themselves, but occasionally; because the soul so often complies with them, and becomes guilty; and thus these operations of the flesh are sad occasions of sin.

Now in this present fallen state, wherein all the children of Adam are found, these sinful motions and ferments, appetites, and passions abound in our flesh and blood; partly as we derive too much of them from our sinful parents, and partly as we have too much encouraged and strengthened them ourselves, by frequent practice and indulgence. It is evident also, that the greatest part of the actions of our lives are ready to be influenced by appetite or affection; and it is plain, that the outward senses of the body, or the inward ferments, motions, and impressions of flesh and blood have so large a share in them, that they are called the deeds of the body, the desires, lusts, and affections of the flesh, in many places of scripture; thence it comes to pass that our flesh becomes the chief cause and occasion of sin to the soul.

Now though it be difficult, as I have hinted, in many particular actions, to determine precisely how far the influence of the flesh reaches, and how far it is the act of the mind or spirit, yet it is of great use in the christian life to search into these matters, in order to find how far our actions are criminal and guilty, that we may abase our souls before God, and take shame to ourselves so far as we are culpable; and on the other hand, that from a melancholy or superstitious mistake, we may not charge ourselves with more guilt than God charges us with, or lay heavier loads upon our own consciences than the divine law lays upon us.

We shall find these enquiries also of excellent use to lead us to proper methods for the mortification of sin, and to shew us the justice and wisdom of divine conduct, and the holiness and beauty of the providence of God, in appointing our present state of trial, in order to a future judgment.

I. The *first* thing I shall discourse on here, is the unhappy influence that our flesh, or animal nature, has to tempt us to sin. And then

II. I shall shew what powers the soul is furnished with to resist the sinful motions of the flesh, and to maintain the sacred warfare.

This is the proposition therefore that I shall first lay down in my discourse; *viz.* That the principles, springs, and occasions of our sinful actions lie very much in the flesh; and these have a fatal and unhappy influence to lead the soul or spirit into sin. I shall make this evident from the word of God, especially from the writings of the blessed apostles; and shall confirm it by many common observations and an easy train of reasoning.

When those sacred writers have occasion to describe sin, in its principles or operations, they use the words *flesh*, *fleshly*, or *carnal*, *the body*, or *the members*, with much freedom and frequency. St. Peter speaks of *walking after the flesh;* 2 Pet. ii. 20. of alluring men by *the lusts of the flesh;* 2 Pet. ii. 18. *of fleshly lusts that war against the soul;* 1 Pet. ii. 11. St. Paul bids us *mortify the deeds of the body;* Rom. viii. 12. and he calls the principle of sin *the body of death;* Rom. vii. 24. He speaks of *sin reigning in our mortal bodies;* Rom. vi. 12. He places the sinful principles, which he calls *the law of sin, in our very members;* Rom. vii. 23. And particular sins he calls *our members;* Col. iii. 5. And, in correspondence with him, the apostle James speaks of *lusts that war in our members;* James iv. 1. And John and Jude make mention of *the lusts of the flesh*, and *garments spotted with the flesh.* And there are few words more frequent on St. Paul's tongue than the word flesh, when he would signify sin; the mortification whereof he calls *crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts;* Gal. v. 24. He names *adultery, fornication, idolatry, hatred, envy, murder, drunkenness, revellings, and such like*, the works of the flesh, *Gal.* v. 19. Persons in a sinful state are said to be *in the flesh;* Rom. viii. 8, 9. A course of sinning is called *sowing to the flesh, living after the flesh, minding the things of the flesh, walking after the flesh, fulfilling the desires and lusts of the flesh*, in several parts of his epistles.

But in sanctified and unsanctified persons, sin, in the judgment of St. Paul, lies very much in the flesh, as to the springs, principles, and occasions of it. See *Rom.* vii. 5. compared with the 18th and 25th verses. In *Rom.* vii. 5. St. Paul speaks concerning the natural and unregenerate state: *When we were in the flesh*, that is, all flesh, no spirit, that is, no spiritual life, then *the motions of sin did work in our members, to bring forth fruit unto death.* And when he speaks concerning himself in a regenerate state, at the end of that chapter, he describes sin still as having its occasion and cause much seated in the flesh. See verses 18 and 25. *I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing: I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind. With my mind I serve the law of God, but with my flesh the law of sin.* So that, considering himself either in a natural or in a regenerate state, still he supposes the great occasion of sinful actions to proceed from the flesh.

I confess that in some places of the New Testament, and perhaps in several of these which I have now cited, the word flesh may be used something figuratively, to signify all the principles of sin that are in human nature, whether they immediately reside in the mind, or in the body, as the subject; but the figure itself seems to be borrowed from this very sentiment, that the flesh, with its affections and appetites towards fleshly objects, is the chief spring and occasion of sin.

I might add also, that there are some other places of scripture where the word flesh

must necessarily be taken in a literal and proper sense, denoting the body to be the seat or spring of many sinful affections; as *Eph.* ii. 3. where *the desires of the flesh* are distinguished from the sinful desires of the mind. And 2 *Cor.* vii. 1. where both the *filthiness of flesh and spirit* is mentioned; and there are very few places which will not allow us to understand it in a literal sense. And it is evident to any one who compares the various parts of the writings of this apostle, that he speaks ten times of the *body*, *the flesh*, or *the members*, as the springs of sin, where he once mentions the lusts of the mind; intimating that the far greatest part of the sins of men are derived from their flesh, and are owing to their compliance with the sinful desires or affections of the body.

I would not be mistaken here, as if I supposed the flesh to be the only immediate spring of all our sins; though perhaps it is the original and remote spring of all, as I shall shew presently: But the soul of man, being once depraved, has many sinful qualities in it; the understanding and the will, the very *mind and conscience, are defiled*; Tit. i. 15. The soul itself has some propensities to things that are forbidden, as well as sinful aversions to God, and things holy and heavenly. There are the lusts of the mind as well as *lusts of the flesh.* There is a *filthiness both of flesh and spirit.* The devils, who have no flesh and blood belonging to them, are vile sinners; these are called *spiritual wickednesses in high places;* Eph. vi. 12. or, as it may be translated, wicked spirits in heavenlies; that is, in the airy regions: So the spirit of man has sins of its own, that it borrows not immediately from the flesh: There is a pride in the mind, arising from learning and intellectual powers, and accomplishments; there are vain and excessive desires of human knowledge; there is a sinful curiosity, prying into secret futurities; there is a glorying in self, a vanity of mind, and self-confidence, instead of trusting in God, and giving him the glory of all: There is indeed a secret dislike and aversion to God and holiness in the soul of every unsanctified sinner; these are more spiritual iniquities.

I might add also, that there are several of those sins which, in some appearances of them, are numbered among the works of the flesh, because they are often excited, and almost always increased, by the humours and ferments of the body; which yet, in some other operations and appearances, begin in the spirit, belong chiefly to the soul, and must be called spiritual sins, or lusts of the mind; such as malice and envy, self-conceit, emulation, hatred of good men, &c. which are doubtless found in the fallen angels, those evil spirits who have no flesh about them. Now as an unsanctified soul may be sometimes guilty of these when in the body, so, when it is dismissed from flesh, we must grant, that it would be filled with all these iniquities, these spiritual lusts, for ever, though none of the carnal sins, no appetites to fleshly objects, should follow it into the separate state.

But the point which I propose to prove is this, that though there may be several sins that arise chiefly from the mind, yet there are multitudes of disorderly appetites, sinful inclinations and aversions, as well as violent immoderate tendencies towards lawful objects, seated in our animal nature, in our flesh and blood, in this mortal part of our frame and composition, wherein we are akin to the beasts that perish; and it is by the senses, by these sensitive motions and ferments of flesh and blood, that the human soul is most frequently led into temptation and sin: And more especially I may venture to say, that the soul of a true christian, which is sanctified by the Spirit of God, and has a new and heavenly temper and bias, and a divine nature given it, owes most of its actual transgressions to the flesh, and the lusts thereof, to which it is united in the present state.

There is one objection that seems necessary to be answered, and that is drawn from

the words of our Saviour, Mark vii. 21, 23. *For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, &c. All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.* Now some person may say, it is evident that by the heart he did not mean that inward bowel so called, but the soul itself; because, according to the vulgar philosophy, and common sentiments of the Jews, the soul of man had its chief residence in the heart; and upon this account they attributed to the heart the several affections and inward operations of the soul, whether they were sinful or holy; and in this sense our Saviour may be supposed to attribute to the soul, or spirit in man, all these wickednesses. But it is easy to solve this difficulty two ways.

1. That neither the philosophy of the Jews, nor the common language which our Saviour used, did make any nice distinction in those principles of human actions, what share the spirit had in them, and what the flesh; but they used the word heart for all those inward powers of the man whence outward actions proceeded; and this because the springs and motions of the blood and life, as well as the ferments of several passions, were found there: So that our Saviour using the common language of the people, does by no means exclude the inward ferments of the flesh from their share in these sinful actions, but rather includes them in the word heart.

2. If we could suppose the word heart in this place to signify merely the soul or spirit, yet it would by no means exclude the inward ferments of the flesh from being the first springs and occasions of many of these sinful practices, for they do not become sins till the soul has consented to them; nor can they break forth into outward acts without the command, or at least the sinful compliance of the soul. Thus all those actions that may justly be called evil and wicked, such as Christ here mentions, proceed from the soul, so far as they are truly and properly sinful; and yet the first secret occasions and incentives of many of them may spring very much from the powers of the flesh.

Now as I have made it to appear, in some good measure, that the springs and principles of sin lie very much in our fleshly natures, from the frequent expressions of holy scripture, so it may be made yet more evident still, by these following considerations, drawn from reason, observation, and experience.

1. Consider how different are the sins of men, according to their peculiar constitutions of flesh and blood. These may be called the *sins that easily beset us;* Heb. xii. 1. because our temper and constitution is always present with us.

Those that are of a brisk and sanguine make, whose blood flows high and vigorous, how often are they tempted by the gay scenes of life to pursue vanity, and to indulge forbidden pleasures? Luxury and intemperance are their peculiar vices; they follow after carnal mirth with eager gust, as well as with long forgetfulness of God, and of things spiritual. By this means they indulge a fatal security, and groundless presumption of long life here, or happiness hereafter, being ever animated by lively sensual fancies, appetites, and passions.

On the other hand, those that have melancholy humours mingled with their natural constitution, are inclined to sullen vices, to an unsociable and uncharitable behaviour among men, as well as they are often tempted, under the influence of these prevailing humours of the body, to despair of the mercies of God, and, upon this account, to abandon all religion. Some have a greediness of desire wrought into the very frame of their natures; and these are inclined to selfish and covetous iniquities, and often are found hard-hearted and uncompassionate to the necessities and cries of the poor. Others are sour and peevish in their native temper, having an excess of sharp juices mingled with

their flesh and blood; and these are easily awakened to sudden wrath and resentment, and kindled into a flame of sinful anger, upon the first and slightest provocation.

I might instance in several other qualities of the constitution, whereby multitudes of iniquities arise amongst men, and sufficiently discover that the flesh is a most fruitful spring of temptations, and a constant occasion of sin.

2. Consider how many particular sins we may be inclined to, by reason of some sudden distemper of body, or long and habitual diseases that attend flesh and blood. When the sour or acid humours in animal nature rise to an irregular height, or when the body is frequently exercised with sharp and tedious pains, even a well-tempered man becomes peevish and fretful; he vexes his own spirit with impatience; he murmurs against the hand of God; and this secret uneasiness, though it dares not appear in visible rage against his Creator, yet it cannot contain itself in silence, but breaks out with too much evidence and guilt, quarrelling with his fellow-creatures round about him: He tires out his best friends with perpetual disquietude; he loses his meek and gentle temper; and the man that was wont to be always pleased and easy, now resents every thing, and scarce any body can please him.

This appears with bright evidence to be occasioned by bodily disorders; for even our natural hunger makes us peevish: When sharp and corrosive juices prey upon the stomach itself, for want of food, how touchy and fretful does our temper grow, till a good meal provides matter for those digestive juices to act upon? then the flesh grows easy, and the good humour returns.—But to pursue the observation concerning diseases.

When the natural spirits are reduced very low by long weakness, how cold and inactive are some good men? When phlegmatic humours prevail in the body, how slothful are some christians in every duty? How backward to all active services of God or man? Even those very persons who were once cheerful and zealous, and ready to every good work. After the same manner, when, through distemper of body, black and melancholy juices get the ascendant over the more sprightly animal powers, how often do we find persons of a sweet affable behaviour grow sullen and unsociable? Those who were fond of company and conversation, seek dark corners and solitary chambers of retirement; they grow listless to every diversion, and will hardly admit a visitant, or give answers to the common questions of life.

Again, when the powers of nature are broken by continual diseases, the man of courage becomes fearful, and starts aside from duty at every appearing difficulty: The man of faith gives in to fears and doubts, to perpetual unbelievings, and suspicious thoughts, with regard to the promises of God, and all the encouragements of the gospel.

And to put this matter beyond all dispute, experience teaches us, that the very same persons who had been fretful, peevish, slothful, sullen, or excessively timorous, under the influences of these several distempers of body; when, by the means of medicine, they have been restored to health, they have returned again to the cheerful practices of those single and social virtues which so long lay cramped, confined, and buried under the diseases of the flesh. Now if the occasion of these several sorts of sin, both of omission and commission, did not chiefly arise from the flesh, why should the same christian so remarkably find his whole temper and his conduct altered for the worse by the diseases of his body, and restored again by the recovery of his health?

3. Consider how different are the sins of youth and old age; how contrary are their several temptations. The youth delights in gay company, public vanities, sensual amuse-

ments, luxury, and profuseness; he contemns money, and despises his ease, to pursue with labour the gratifications of fancy and wanton appetite; and hereby he neglects all the duties of retirement and serious thoughtfulness. The old man loves his ease above all things, except his money; he neglects and despises the pleasures of the flesh, and gay diversions; but he daily hoards up his gold for fear of want; and in counting over his treasure he wastes the latter hours of his life, which he should spend in a preparation for death at hand.

The youth fears nothing, and rushes on to guilt headlong; the old man is frighted at every thing, and shrinks back from the most necessary duties.

Whence are all these differences of sin? The natural philosopher will give happy hints toward the solving this question with ease and truth: He knows that one is occasioned by the florid blood, and juices, and active powers of young human nature; these hurry the soul on to pursue every fleshly delight. The other is owing to the languid and gross stagnant humours that mingle with the blood of old age: These render him dull and inactive; and his perpetual fears of want, and poverty, and of every other evil, arise partly from the poor low state of those feeble spirits that attend that last and expiring period of life. The unholy soul is too easily influenced by both these extremes, in the different seasons of its dwelling in this mortal and sinful flesh; and the soul that is sanctified finds it hard work to resist.

4. Let us consider yet again, how great a part of the sins of men arise from the presence of tempting sensible objects; and these are conveyed to the mind by the sensitive powers of the flesh. What influence could the whole world of enticing objects have on the spirit, if the notices of them were not brought to the spirit by the senses? The presence of alluring temptations strikes strongly on the outward organ of sense, awakens the carnal appetite, and with a powerful, an unhappy, and an almost constraining force, persuades the soul to guilty practices and enjoyments. At other times it causes a sinful neglect of proper duties to God or man; or, at least, it calls in vain thoughts to mingle with our services, both civil and religious, and thus gives them a sensual taint, and pollutes and spoils them.

Particular circumstances of time and place, where sensual temptations attend us, become unhappy occasions of defiling the soul. And where is the time, or where the place, in which such objects or occasions are not to be found? The daylight opens before us the scenes of a vain world, crowded with ten thousand allurements to sin; nor can the shadows of the night conceal or banish those temptations that attack us at other avenues besides the eye. A wanton song, an immodest touch, the scent of dainty meats, or the remembered relish of delicious wine, are sufficient to provoke the fleshly appetites, and to inflame the soul to the pursuit of iniquity. Thus every sense has a hand in the conveyance of sin to the spirit.

Not the board, nor the bed, not the shop, nor the exchange; no, not the closet nor the temples of worship, are secure from temptations that assault the soul, by means of this wretched flesh. We are in danger when in the midst of company; nor are we safe when solitary and alone. How often have eyes and ears been the unhappy torches to kindle either unlawful love, or malice and revenge, according as a man hath been casually led within sight or hearing of the person that has allured him to pleasure, or put him to pain? Pictures and stories have many a time become fatal instruments of the same mischief. When we sit at a well-spread table, doth not our palate often tempt us to improper food, and to riot upon a beloved dish? We venture to taste of the luscious compound, even

though we suspect, or are almost certain, it has sickness or disease lurking in it; and sometimes we indulge the freedom of appetite in the most wholesome provisions to a vicious excess and surfeit. How many a wretch is enticed to become a glutton, or a drunkard, or to rush on to the pursuit of adultery and polluted pleasure, by his passing through some ensnaring occurrences of life, and having the soul united to this sinful flesh? The wanton eye, and the greedy palate, are tempting engines, that draw the mind away to forbidden objects.

It is upon this account that our blessed Lord gives advice in his excellent sermon: *If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out; or, if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast them both away from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell;* Matt. v. 29, 30. And though our Lord may be supposed here to speak metaphorically, and to bid us part with those beloved sins that are dear to us as an hand or an eye, yet he designs to teach us that the eye, and the hand, and the fleshly powers, may become wretched occasions of sin to us; and if there were no other way to avoid the danger, it is better to bear the pain of parting with those mischievous and offensive members, than yield to their temptations, and rush on to guilt and eternal misery.

I might here also take notice, that the very presence of all sorts of corporeal objects, even the most necessary and the most innocent, may become occassions of sin at special seasons; as when we are engaged in any part of divine worship, the common and obvious appearances round about us, the walls, the doors, the windows, the furniture of the place, or the persons present, impress our senses, and often turn away the thoughts from the sacred work. We forget God to pursue the creature, even in his own awful presence, and in the midst of our solemn devotions. A curious ear shall wrap up the soul in the melody of the song, till it has lost the divine sense and meaning. A vain and wandering eye roves among the faces, the postures, and the dress of our fellow-worshippers, and calls the mind away from prayer and devout attention. Oh! how often does the criminal indulgence of these sensitive powers carry the soul afar off from God and religion! How does it break off many a holy meditation in a moment! What long intervals does it make in our addresses to our Creator, and interline our prayers with folly and sin! So, when we are employed in any business of the civil life, that is our proper present duty, our senses glance at some other object, and draw the soul away to a quite different work, which is sinful at that season; though perhaps it might be the duty of the next hour, or the proper business of the morrow. And where is the man that has not reason to complain often of this sort of temptations every day, while his spirit dwells in this house of flesh?

5. Consider farther, that most of the temptations that we meet with, even when the outward objects are absent, arise from the images of them remaining in the brain; which is, as it were, the shop or storehouse of the memory and the fancy. The impressions which those objects made on the outward senses, when they were present, are conveyed to the brain, and laid up there, ready to appear at the first call of the mind, when these objects are withdrawn. But they oftentimes also start out unbidden, and a whole scene of wickedness is spread all over the imagination, before the soul is aware, and sometimes when the soul expressly forbids it too: Then the corrupt appetites are kindled, and sinful passions awake again. Thus the temptations return, and solicit the spirit to sin, even when the objects are afar off, and out of reach: For fancy and memory are but the

pictures of sense; it is sight and hearing at second hand. Now if the soul seeks and calls for these tempting visions to appear, or if it indulges these impure exercises of the imagination; if it delights itself in these criminal ideas when they happen to arise, and please itself with these painted shapes of iniquity, then it too frequently repeats the sin, and renews its own guilt and defilement.

Such is the composition of our natures, that the images on the brain, the traces and footsteps of past sensations, and the springs of fancy and passion, are linked together by unknown and unperceived ties; so that when one is touched and awakened, a whole train of images appears at once, and awakens all those fancies, and those guilty passions, which were linked and connected together when that leading image was first painted on the brain through the organs of sense. So one line of a comedy, or the door of the play-house, or the sound of an actor, or a hero's name, shall call over again all those alluring and mischievous scenes which first drew the heart away from God and religion, spoiled the labours of a pious education, and plunged the young sinner into early debaucheries.

Besides all these mischiefs that arise from the recollection of past occurrences, there is an infinite variety of new scenes of vice, that fancy can furnish out on the sudden, by mingling, joining, enlarging, multiplying, and compounding the vicious images that the brain can supply it with. Thus in this shop of vanity, this workhouse of sin, and these secret chambers of imagery, new-devised iniquities are coined continually; new engines are forged every minute, by a busy and fruitful fancy, to charm the soul, and transport it to fresh guilt and ruin. Thus the treasury of the brain, and those inward and hidden parts of the flesh, become many times as effectual occasions of sin, as all the outward senses joined together, and an army of tempting objects.

6. There is another consideration too, that will make it appear to any person of an enquiring and thoughtful genius, that sin has much of its seat and root in the flesh, if we do but reflect how many iniquities we commit, which, in their outward appearance, are very nearly imitated by brute creatures, which have no intelligent spirit, no rational soul; whose blood is the very soul, spirit, and life of them, as the scripture speaks; *Lev.* xvii. 14. *Eccles.* iii. 21.

Is there not something like envy working in a dog, when he forbids the ox from the crib or the manger, and yet he neither wants nor tastes the hay nor the corn himself? Is he not the picture of malice when he grins with fury, and grows mad with rage, against the harmless traveller? Does not the wasp, that little angry insect, fix a sting in us sometimes without any provocation? And thus it becomes the very image and proverb of ill-nature as well as the dog; so that men of such a temper are called dogged and waspish. Does not our Lord Jesus himself give Herod the name of a *fox* for the same reason, *viz.* because of the craft, the plunder, and the various and bloody injuries which were practised by that man among his subjects, and are well represented by the natural actions of that subtle and mischievous animal among his fellow-brutes. See *Luke* xiii. 32.

Is not the swine often overwhelmed with food by its own greediness? And does not that foul animal imitate the glutton well? You grant all this proceeds from the very make and frame, the blood and juices of these animals, and from the keenness of other peculiar qualities of their natural spirits: And why may not the first motions and stirrings of the same vices in us proceed from the ferments of our blood too? Have you never observed the resemblance of pride working in a peacock, or a well-fed horse; how those brutal beings exult and glory, the one in his beauty, the other in his strength and his peculiar

endowments? This proud ferment heaves and swells their bodily natures; and why may not some of our pride be supposed to begin there too?

I confess these animals have no rational mind in them, no thinking spirit, no will either to resist or consent to these motions of the flesh or blood, so that they are under no moral law: These actions of theirs are agreeable to their original nature, and are under a divine appointment, rather than a prohibition; therefore they are not capable of sin and guilt. But man, who hath these same animal motions and ferments of the flesh, and the same appetites and springs of passion, had nothing vicious in his original frame and constitution, but derived all that is faulty from his first parents, who were wilful sinners, and who spoiled their whole nature, and, upon this account, he will hardly be found innocent.

But his guilt appears much more evident, when we consider that man has also an intelligent mind, a reasonable soul, capable, in some measure, of resisting these irregular tendencies of the flesh; therefore he becomes guilty in the sight of God, by wilful consent to them, and indulgence of them, contrary to the forbidding law of his Creator. Now this proposed contest between flesh and spirit is ordained by God our Maker in infinite wisdom, to be a proper state of trial for us, in order to future rewards and punishments.

7. I might add, in the last place, another argument to prove that our flesh is the chief occasion of sin to the soul, from this consideration, that the soul at first is tainted, corrupted, or defiled with original sin, by its union to sinful flesh. You will immediately enquire, how is this possible, since the soul is a pure spiritual being, created immediately by God himself, and therefore innocent and holy; and since it cannot touch, nor be touched, by any thing corporeal, such as flesh and blood? In what manner can the soul, though united to the body, receive any such sinful pollution or sinful impression from the body?—Take this account of it in short in these few propositions.

1. Though the spirit of man be incorporeal, and is created by God without depraved or sinful qualities in it, yet it never exists, or comes into being, but as a part of human nature; and that not as a piece of new workmanship, but as a part of mankind propagated from parents by the continued power of God's creating word, "Be fruitful and multiply." When the infant body of man is so far formed as to become fit for union with a rational soul, the soul comes into existence in union with the body, by the original law of creation, and becomes a part of the man as much as the breath, which is borrowed from the air, or the blood, which is made out of the food of the mother.

2. Thence it follows, that the soul is not to be judged of, or considered as a single separate being, but as in union with flesh and blood, as making up a compound creature of the human species.

3. Since in the very first moment of its being, by the old and general rules or laws of creation and providence, it belongs to a human body, derived from *Adam*, it is esteemed as propagated by the parents, and it becomes hereby a son or a daughter of fallen man, and is naturally, by the law of creation, involved in the same circumstance of ruin, has no claim to preserving or securing grace, above the mere and untaught faculties of its intelligent nature.

4. Since this body has many sinful ferments and irregular appetites in it, conveyed down from the original sinner, the new-made spirit being created and joined to the flesh, is perpetually impressed and allured by these motions, passions, and appetites of the flesh, and willingly complies with those that are criminal, as well as those that are innocent; and thus the young creature contracts actual and personal guilt, perhaps as soon

as it is capable of exerting any actions with understanding; and such as are properly human, and capable of moral differences.

Thus the soul is defiled by communion with the flesh; and, according to the original law of creation, which is called the covenant of God with *Adam*, it partakes of a sinful nature from degenerate parents, and by degrees becomes an actual sinner.—But I proceed no further on this head, having delivered my sentiments in another place more at large, in the deep and difficult controversy of original sin, which may be best accounted for in this manner, as far as my judgment reaches. What I have said here is sufficient to shew that, in the present state of human nature, the flesh is the chief cause and occasion of sin to the soul.

Meditation I. And are we tempted to sin so often by our fleshly powers? Then how little should we *reckon ourselves debtors to the flesh?* How much mischief has it already done us? And how much still have we reason to fear from its influences, as long as we continue to dwell in it?

Little do you think, O sinners; little do you think what an enemy you caress, while you pamper the flesh, and *make provisions to fulfil the lusts of it;* it is a foe that sits close to you, and is a partner of your very natures; and thus it has a thousand opportunities to do you mischief, when other adversaries are afar off: It has done you already more injury than the devil and the world joined together; for in all the pernicious and secret snares which they have laid for your souls, and all the open attacks that they have made upon your virtue, or your peace, the flesh has ever been an accomplice with them, and helped onward the fatal design; besides the many guilty practices into which it has drawn you, without the assistance either of the world or the devil. Not all the deceitful vanities on the earth, nor all the armies of hell, could lead your souls astray from God, and your own happiness, in half so many instances as they have done, if you had not such a secret traitor so near you, that is in league with them for your ruin. And shall this enemy be your counsellor and your guide? Shall this flesh be your chief darling, which has been ever warring against your soul?

Would you not distrust a man that has dwelt with you from your childhood, and every day of your life has led you into some mischief? Would you not be watchful and jealous of all his motions, who has betrayed you into some snare almost every hour? Would you not guard against his perverse practices, if, whenever he took a walk with you, he had thrown you into a pit, and defiled your garments? Such a dangerous attendant is this flesh of yours in the present degenerate state.

Why then will ye be so fond of this tempter, this deceitful companion? Why will you spend your best moments, the prime of youth, and the very flower of life, to dress and adorn, to flatter, and please, and gratify, such a wretched traitor to your soul, such a foe to your eternal welfare? The very best of men have already given too much respect to it. But when a person is sanctified by divine grace, the flesh begins then to be subdued to some useful services to God: Then the eye by reading, and the ear by hearing, and the feet by going to attend upon the divine word, are made to help forward his spiritual and heavenly interest; and many a hundred services of this kind must the members of the body do, in order to make the soul any tolerable recompence for all the injuries that the soul has received from its corrupt appetites and passions. Well therefore might the apostle say, *we are by no means debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh;* Rom. viii. 12. Nor do we owe any more of our strength, time, thought, or contrivance, to gratify its vain or sinful inclinations; *for they that are Christ's have so far crucified the*

flesh, with the affections and lusts of it, as to *keep it under*, and hold it in subjection, that it may not get the mastery over the soul. *Gal.* v. 24. and 1 *Cor.* ix. 27.

Nourish and support the flesh, that is your duty: Heal it when it is sick, and endeavour to preserve it in health, that it may be a proper servant to the spirit. It was made this end; and the soul should know its own dignity, and keep the body in its place: But dare not pamper it with too much fondness, lest it usurp the dominion, and cause the soul to walk after it in the sinful appetites and inclinations thereof; which is quite contrary to the character of the saints, as they are described by the apostle: *Rom.* viii. 1. *Those that are in Christ Jesus,* to whom *there is no condemnation, walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.*

II. Is the body such a foul and wretched spring of sin? Then what a heaven of purity and pleasure is provided for the children of God at their death, and is contained in those few words of the apostle, *absent from the body;* 2 Cor. v. 8. When a child of Adam has received a new nature by the new-creating power of the Holy Spirit, and is become a son or daughter of God, it is thenceforward as it were, a prisoner in this untoward mansion of flesh and blood: It is in a state of perpetual conflict, yet it cannot change these old sensual appetites, nor correct at once these long habits of irregular desire. It labours daily in this work; it maintains a vigorous warfare against the flesh; but, through the power of sensible enticing objects all around us, it is too often carried away into sinful compliances. *O wretched man that I am,* saith the apostle, what an unhappy *law,* or spring *of sin, is there in my members,* that carries me away from the better dictates of the law of my renewed mind and bears *me captive to the law of sin that is in my flesh! O wretched man* indeed! and *who shall deliver me?* O blessed hour of death, that shall break the chain and set the prisoner free! O sweet and glorious moment of release from this body, which tainted my spirit early with its poisonous influences; and, by drawing me away perpetually by its dangerous attachments to things sensible, has kept me long at a painful distance from my God!

The Improvement. The former part of this discourse proposed this sentiment, *viz.* That the principles and springs, or occasions of sin, lie chiefly in our bodily natures, in our flesh and blood: And as I have made this to appear from several places of scripture, so I have proved it from rational observations; *viz.* how great an influence the different constitutions of mankind, their casual distempers, and their various ages of life, have upon the soul, to incline it to the practice of different sins; and all these are plainly derived from flesh and blood. I have considered further, what sinful actions arise from the presence of tempting objects impressing the senses; and when the images of them are treasured up in the brain, they become the seeds of impure imagination and sinful appetite. Many of our sins also are nearly imitated by the brutes that perish, whose blood is their life and soul; and even original sin is conveyed to us by the flesh.

Hence we may learn to judge aright concerning several cases of difficulty in the christian life, relating to sins and temptations, and find an answer to some practical questions of great importance.

Question I. Whether the first start or motion of our nature towards unlawful objects is properly sinful, and brings guilt upon the soul?

Answer. The mere ferments of the blood and spirits, the appetites and motions, that belong purely and only to the flesh, and spring entirely from it, are not properly sins; because the flesh, considered in itself, is but mere matter: Now mere matter, whether it

were united to a rational mind or no, would be thus moved and acted by natural springs and impressions, and is under no moral law; and where no law is, there is no transgression. The brutal or animal nature, abstracted from the soul, is not capable of knowledge or will, consent or dissent; but the first moment that the soul indulges or consents to any of these irregular ferments, these springs of unruly passion in the blood, and yields to these inordinate appetites of the flesh, it commits sin; as soon as it complies with any of these desires, that are contrary to its duty, the soul becomes guilty in the sight of God; for the proper notion of sin is the tendency of an intelligent being to things disagreeable to the divine law; the practice of what is forbidden, or the neglect of what is commanded.

If the eye beholds food, though the man be assured there is hidden poison in it, yet the hungry stomach will have a natural appetite toward it, and this is not sinful; but if the soul comply, and the man eats it, or desires to eat it, he breaks the sixth command, which forbids all murder. Our Saviour has sufficiently decided this part of the controversy in his sermon on the mount, that the soul's very desire and consent to sin is sinful; *Matt.* v. 27. And the fuller and stronger the consent of the will is, and the further it goes on to encourage or impel the body to the forbidden action, so much greater is the sin.

When our blessed Saviour spake these words, *he that looketh upon a woman, to lust after her, hath committed adultery already in his heart:* Matt. v. 28. it cannot be supposed that he intended to give a law that should make the inward motions or ferments of mere animal nature sinful; for these were not originally and naturally subject to the immediate command of the soul in the state of innocency, so as to be raised or prevented absolutely and immediately by the will, as the motion of the hand or foot is. But his design is to shew, that the soul itself inwardly consenting to these animal ferments and motions, or encouraging or indulging them but one moment, is really sinful in the sight of God, even though the man did never proceed to the outward and actual commission of those sins in the flesh: And hereby he vindicated the law of God from those narrow and corrupt expositions which the scribes, and doctors, and interpreters of those days put upon it, who would allow nothing to be sinful but the outward act.

This will appear with fuller evidence, if we consider that there might be in the flesh of innocent Adam, some natural appetites towards objects that might be forbidden by the express and positive law of God; for the flesh, merely considered in itself, has a natural propensity to things that please and gratify it, without any regard to the unseen circumstances or moral relations of things; without any respect to a law that permits or prohibits them. Thus Adam, or his partner, might feel an innocent inclination in their animal natures, towards any fruit in the garden *that was pleasant to the eyes, and good for food*, even to that *of the tree of knowledge:* And this indeed was necessary, in order to make a proper state of trial; and it was fit and becoming divine wisdom, to appoint such a tree to be the test of their obedience. Now while they continued innocent, the soul resisted this inclination of the flesh, under a sense that the fruit was forbidden; but the first moment that they indulged the flesh in this irregular appetite, or consented to it, they made themselves transgressors; then their nature was corrupted; thus they did eat the unlawful food, and became the parents of a sinful race.

The chief differences therefore in this matter, betwixt innocent and fallen man, are these:

1. That it is probable his flesh might have no natural inclination to objects apparently hurtful in themselves, but to such only as might be made unlawful by some attending circumstances, or by an express and positive law.—2. These inclinations also, perhaps,

were but few and feeble, in comparison of the multitudes of violent appetites, and irregular desires, that are found in our degenerate natures, to all sorts of unlawful objects.—And 3. That his soul had power in itself, by due consideration, to resist and subdue these appetites of the flesh, though not absolutely to prevent them; whereas in our present corrupt state, we are soon transported and hurried away into a sinful compliance with them: The spirit is ready to yield as soon as it feels the temptations of the body; so that there are scarce any such inordinate ferments or propensities arising or stirring in our flesh and blood, but the soul more or less consents to them in some degree.

Thus, though the first motions towards sin that are in our members are not in themselves properly sinful, nor is the sense of perception of the mind sinful neither, for this is natural and necessary, according to the composition of human nature, if the mind were never so holy: Yet these motions seldom arise in our members, especially in an unregenerate state, but the soul is defiled, and becomes guilty; and that is by some consent of will, some degree of indulgence to them, or compliance with them. Well then may we cry out with the Psalmist, *Psalm* xix. 12. *Who can understand his errors?* Cleanse us, O Lord, from the multitudes of our transgressions, and the millions of our iniquities: *Cleanse us from secret offences, and keep us free from presumptuous sins.*

Question II. Whether all impure imaginations and blasphemous thoughts are properly sinful, and render us guilty before God?

Answer. It is possible that some peculiar qualities of the constitution, some distempered humours of the body, or some sort of improper food, may excite impure images on the brain; and this is often done also by the casual and unavoidable occurrences of human life. An indecent picture, an immodest or profane song, or the vile, the impious, or uncleanly language of the wicked world, may spread a dangerous scene over the fancy. The devil also is a watchful and a busy adversary, and we know not what secret power he has to draw evil pictures on the brain, to write blasphemy there, or to awaken some old traces of immorality. The powers and devices of wicked spirits are a great and unsearchable secret to us, who dwell in the flesh. He may buzz into the ear some impious syllables, or lewd and profane sounds, especially when his chain is a little lengthened, and he has a divine permission to approach human nature.

But all these things that I have here described, may be impressed on the animal powers of an innocent person: The soul may have a very painful perception of all this, without actual sin, supposing still that it strives and *wrestles* both *against* its own *flesh and blood*, and *against those principalities and powers of darkness;* supposing that it fights, watches, and prays for divine aid, and uses all the holy armour and the weapons of sacred appointment, to fence against these assaults of fleshly and spiritual enemies, these sore invasions of its holiness and peace.

I confess it is hard, in this fallen and imperfect state, to be thus attacked on any side, without some degree of compliance in an unguarded moment; and especially if we are beset on all sides, and assaulted by the flesh, the world, and the devil at once. It is seldom or never that the best of men can pass through such a scene of conflict and sharp trial, without something of defilement. Our Saviour himself indeed was assaulted by Satan, and by the world; but *the prince* of darkness *found nothing within him* to promote or assist his temptations; *John* xiv. 30. But he finds so much tinder in our nature, ready to catch fire, and blaze at every spark of iniquity, that it is scarce possible we should pass through such dangerous hours of contest, and keep our spirits pure and unpolluted.

Yet still it must be determined, that where there is perpetual resistance, and no manner of indulgence of these vicious scenes, where there is no consent of the will to them, nor a neglect of any proper and appointed means to oppose and suppress them, there is no sin.

Let this be a word of consolation and sacred encouragement to those poor melancholy christians who are sorely buffeted by *Satan*, and his hellish suggestions, or are vexed with the wild and unruly insults of fancy, under some distemper of the flesh. Let them enquire whether these evil thoughts be not their constant burden; whether it is not their daily and hourly toil of spirit, to suppress and cast them out; whether they do not make this the matter of their holy complaint and mourning before God night and day; whether they are not wrestling hard with these adversaries of their peace, and pleading hard at the mercy-seat, for grace to resist and subdue them? Then let them take the same encouragement that *St. Paul* does, who is an excellent example both of such sufferings, and of such hope and consolation. 2 Cor. xii. 7—10. He had *a thorn in the flesh*, he had *an angel of Satan sent to buffet him, he besought the Lord thrice;* that is, often and earnestly, for deliverance: And though God did not answer him immediately by a full release from the temptation, yet he afforded him such a sufficiency of grace, that he could glory in hope of final victory. Nor did he call the buffetings of *Satan*, nor *the thorn in the flesh*, his own sins; but his infirmities, which he durst even glory in, from his great assurance of the grace of *Christ*, to assist him in the combat; *verse* 9.

I have written this, to prevent the humble holy soul, that lies under these exercises, from charging itself with more guilt than the law or justice of God charges it with: Let such a one also take comfort from those words of the apostle, as *there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh*, in the course of their lives; *Rom.* viii. 1. so there is no guilt in such instances of sinful imagination, where there is no indulgence.

Yet here it is necessary to take notice, that some persons have heretofore given so criminal an indulgence to their sensual lusts, or have been so freely engaged in profane or immoral conversation in their younger years, that they have tainted their fancy with many foul and impious representations, inscribed it with vicious words and images, and lodged a fatal treasure of iniquity there. They have often recalled these scenes with so much delight, that when divine grace has been pleased to awaken them to a sense of their folly, and give a pious turn to their souls, they have been many years perplexed with the vile workings of imagination: These scenes of iniquity have returned unbidden, and risen up incessantly, in spite of all their sacred labour to abolish them: These have filled their spirits with sorrow and perpetual anguish; and there is just reason they should deeply humble themselves before God on this account. For though it is possible such wicked thoughts may be suggested to holy souls, who have kept themselves in their youth from this sort of defilement, yet when persons themselves have been so far accessary to their own guilt and misery, they ought to take fresh occasion, from their present temptations, to renew and maintain repentance for their old sins.

Besides the habit or customary return of such corrupt imaginations, that these unhappy sinners have entailed upon themselves, they have also given hereby such a fatal handle to the temptations of the devil, and furnished such a pleasing habitation for unclean spirits, that lewd and blasphemous thoughts have been continually imposed upon them with ease, by the sport and malice of the tempter; these have given them many grievous days and restless nights, constant fatigue and combat, and sorrow of

heart; nor could they ever free these inward recesses of the brain, these secret chambers of the fancy, from the impure pictures which they themselves have hung up there, till the whole mortal tabernacle has been demolished. Those wicked images having been graven so deep, and lasted so long, that all their pious labours and tears have never been able to blot them out, till the flesh itself has been destroyed in death.

Betimes then, O ye young sinners, awake betimes to serious piety, and *flee* every *youthful lust;* avoid the persons and the places that would tempt you to sensual or profane practices; turn your eyes away from the very appearances of guilt, and from all defiling representations; let your ears be deaf to all the language of profaneness or immodesty, lest you suffer a fatal inroad to be made upon the avenues of the fancy, and admit such a guilty treasure of mischief and iniquity there, that may lay a foundation for toil and anguish, and much bitterness of soul, in the following and the better years of life.

Question III. Whether we may be guilty of sin in our dreams, in hours of delirium, under a fever, or in seasons of distraction and madness?

Answer. I join all these three together, because they all agree in this, that the representations made on the brain are so strong and predominant in all of them, that imagination is almost equal to sense; it imitates sight and hearing, and the appearances and actions of life so nearly, that the soul cannot distinguish them; and sometimes the wild operations of the brain overpower even the present impressions made upon the senses, and fancy prevails above the ear or the eye. Dreaming is but sleeping distraction, as the distraction of a delirious hour is but a waking dream.

Now where the images of fancy are so prevalent, the soul even of a holy man may be so far overpowered, as that reason is quite thrown out of its seat; the understanding is dazzled and deceived by the glaring flashes of imagination; the notions of conscience, the rules of duty, and the sacred motives of religion, are, as it were, confounded and overwhelmed, and lost for a season, under the constant strong impressions of the animal spirits revelling in the recesses of the brain: And where the disorder rises to such a degree as this, the springs of carnal appetite and passion are soon touched and awakened; and being of a kindred nature, are suddenly inflamed; so that a man of piety may be hurried to consent to sinful practices, under any of these waking or sleeping distractions. In such a case, the guilt seems to be lessened so far, as the reason is drowned in confusion and darkness, and the thought and conscience overpowered and cheated with false impressions. Perhaps at the end of this disorder, when the man awakes into daylight and reason again, he knows nothing of what has passed; or, if he recollects the folly, he blushes and mourns over the infirmity of his nature, and while he asks forgiveness of God, he can scarce forgive himself, that he should yield the least consent to criminal inclination.

Where the confusion of thought does not arise to such an overwhelming degree, but there are some debatings of reason, some notions of duty, some workings of conscience, and yet the soul complies at last, there the guilt is increased, and rises higher in proportion to the exercise of the intellectual faculties. But this crime can never become near to the guilt of the same actions, done in a waking hour, or in a season of health, and soundness of mind and memory. I have known a man of serious piety take the name of God in vain, and curse under the power of distraction, which he would have abhorred with all his soul, if he had been in his senses, and not absolutely overpowered by the disordered humours of the flesh.

Yet take this awful caution by the way: That where these disorders or diseases of the brain, sleeping or waking, are caused by our own folly or wickedness, by luxury, by unmortified lusts, or by any immoral practices, the case seems to be far worse, and perhaps the guilt of every irregular action is proportionably enhanced and aggravated thereby; as in the wild freaks of a drunkard, who has indulged his vicious appetite, till it has overcome all his better faculties; for there reason itself, and the common judgment of mankind, determine the crimes then committed against the society to be justly punishable: He that kills a man in his drunken fit, must be put to death when he is grown sober. And how far God will impute every thing that is criminal, and whether he will not deal with such a one in rigour, according to the full guilt of the crime, can be determined only by God himself. He sees all the secret motions of the flesh and spirit; he weighs every circumstance in a true balance; he knows perfectly all the rules of strict and impartial justice; and will judge the world with divine equity and wisdom.

Let us watch and pray then, lest we enter into temptation in the healthful and waking hours of life: Let us carefully shun all those practices that have any tendency to discompose the brain, or introduce disease or disorder into that part of our animal powers; lest if we bring these inconveniences upon ourselves by our own guilt or negligence, we expose ourselves to more just censure and punishment, for the unhappy effects and attendants of such a disordered imagination.

And there is another reason too why we should take care at all times to employ our thoughts and our time aright? and that is, that we may introduce a better habit into animal nature, and provide better against those seasons wherein either the daily course of nature, or the afflictive providence of God, may seem to give the powers of the flesh an excessive or superior influence over the faculties of the mind. Let us never indulge the corrupt appetites, the unlawful desires, or the sinful passions that work within us: Let us be watchful against every rising enemy, and subdue the vicious propensities of nature, by holy diligence in our proper duty, and by earnest addresses to the throne of grace: Let us treasure up in our imagination the sacred histories of the Bible, and fill our memory with the things of religion; that the ideas of better things than riches, honours, and pleasures, may be ever ready to start up and appear to the soul, when it is at leisure from other necessary business. This might happily furnish out safer and sweeter scenes to entertain fancy at midnight hours, or when the brain labours under worse disorders by reason of some bodily distemper. The wise man tells us, *that a dream cometh through the multitude of business;* Eccles. v. 3. And by the multitude of thoughts that pass through the mind, and are entertained with delight, in the vigorous and wakeful parts of life, the animal powers of fancy and passion will generally be in some measure influenced and regulated. The best way then to cure covetous, or ambitious, or luxurious dreams, is to fight against the workings of these iniquities when we are awake; for a very pure fountain, even under some casual disturbance, will not send forth its streams so much defiled, and so muddy, as where the spring is filthy or corrupt, and under some disturbance too.

Question IV. Whether all persons are equally defiled with original sin?

Answer. We must here distinguish between the guilt of sin belonging to the person, and the power of sin that is in the nature. Now whatsoever guilt is derived to any person from Adam, by communion with him in his first apostasy, the same is derived to all the posterity; nor is this the thing that is doubted or enquired here. But as to the

power of sin in the nature, it is evident that there are not the same degrees of sinful propensity, vicious appetite, and passion, in the bodies of all, even from their very birth and infancy. The constitution of animal or fleshly nature in some, is much more sullen or greedy, more wanton or peevish, more slothful, or proud and haughty, than it is in others, according to the various mixture of the blood and humours, and the different ferments that arise thence, whereby the soul is early impressed and governed, and habituated to particular vices betimes.

Though we are all *conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity*, Psalm li. 5. yet there are some who are, emphatically, wicked in their very constitutions, who are more remarkably estranged to all that is good from the womb, *and go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies;* Psalm lviii. 3. Whereby the psalmist may seem to intimate, that some persons have wickedness more eminently running through their families; they are born and bred utter strangers to God, honesty, and goodness; and they have a sort of craft and knavishness mingled with their temper, that they practise lying as soon as they can speak.

It is evident enough to the observation of every man, that some persons are of a more temperate, more chaste, more modest, more friendly and kind disposition, even in animal nature; they are more plain-hearted, and of a more honest and sincere make from their very infancy; they have more of the dove and of the lamb in them, than of the fox, the bear, or the lion; and the soul is not led astray to the practice of the contrary vices, either so far, or so early, as those who, perhaps, from their immediate parents, have received flesh and blood more tainted with these iniquities. And if this be called a different degree of original sin, I will not stand now to contest the word, nor can I utterly deny the matter.

But still it is abundantly evident also concerning every one of us, who are sons or daughters of *Adam*, how sinful or how holy soever our immediate parents were, that we bring vicious propensities enough with our flesh and blood into this world, that if we encourage and indulge them, and *walk after the flesh*, we shall soon be found sufficiently wicked here, and grow meet for a just condemnation hereafter; and this will be the case of the best constitution, unless a mighty change pass upon nature by the power of renewing and sanctifying grace. All *that is born of the flesh is flesh*, or sinful; and *except a man be born of water and the spirit*, that is, regenerated by the Spirit of God, which is typified by baptismal water, *he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;* John iii. 3, 5, 6.

Question V. Whether the same sin always carries equal guilt with it in different persons, who have the same advantage or the same degrees of knowledge?

Answer. It seems to be supposed in the question, that different means or different measures of knowledge make the sinner more or less guilty in the sight of God; and indeed our Saviour himself has determined that point beyond all dispute; *Matt.* xi. 21, 22. Chorazin and Bethsaida having seen the miracles of Christ, and heard his doctrine, were much more culpable than Tyre and Sidon, whose great ignorance would render their case *more tolerable in the day of judgment.*

But to answer this question, let it be considered, that there are other things besides knowledge that make sins more or less heinous. The same crime, committed under a small and single temptation, is much more culpable than when the temptations are many and strong, whether they be within us or without us. Now, if a person of a sharp and fretful constitution, or whose natural juices of the flesh are soured by long sickness and pain, should fall into frequent passions of sinful anger, notwithstanding all

his labour and watchfulness against it, he is not quite so criminal in the sight of God as another, who has no such peevish and fretful springs of passion in his nature, neither by original constitution, nor by any accidental distemper. The man that perpetually carries about with him the vigorous and active seeds of any sinful appetite or affection, may take ten times more pains in mortification, than another does who is of a happier temperature, and yet may fall more frequently into his own peculiar iniquities, and be overcome by *the sin that easily besets him:* Nor is his guilt so great as it is in those who are blessed with a better animal nature, but either take no care to guard against those sins, or perhaps excite nature to practise the same iniquities, beyond its own inbred appetite. And for this reason it is evident, that a person who, in different periods of life, commits the same sins, may deserve much more blame at one time than another; so wanton practices are more hateful and criminal in old age, and slothfulness and inactivity in duty is a greater fault in the days of youth; because in those different seasons of human life, there is less temptation to those sins arising from the flesh.

So fear, and sudden anger, and sorrow, wheresoever they are found excessive in persons of enfeebled constitutions, labouring under sharp pains, or oppressed by nervous maladies, and weak natural spirits, have not quite so much guilt in them as those sins would have in the same persons, when they were in a state of vigour and health; for then they had less uneasiness within to join with the provocations and temptations from without; and, besides, they were much more capable of bridling the inferior powers, of countermanding the animal motions and evil ferments: Then they could more easily maintain a wise self-government, they could range their thoughts in better array to resist these sudden attacks of the flesh.

I might add further also, that under these sort of infirmities, they are more exposed to sudden surprises; the hurry of the natural spirits shakes the whole network of the nerves in a moment; they throw all the blood into the face at once; or, by a contrary operation, spread a universal chill and tremor over the body, and clothe the countenance in paleness and the image of death. They flash like gunpowder, they force the sweat through every pore, and convey a ferment of passion through the whole nature at once, so that the soul is sometimes seized into a sudden consent to the sinful motions of the body before it is aware; which dangers are much more easily prevented in a calm and healthful state of life. But here let me insert a cautionary remark or two, to guard against the abuse of this doctrine, which is designed for the relief of holy, humble, and dejected souls:

1. Many who return frequently to the commission of the same sin, excuse their own slothful and sottish negligence, by throwing the blame on their constitution; let them take heed, lest it be found that it is their own wilful indulgence of sinful appetite and temptation, and not constitution, hath made the habit of sin so strong within them, and hath formed their very temper into such vice and iniquity, which was by no means born with them in any uncommon degree, but is owing to their own wicked practice: God sees through such vile hypocrisy and disguise as this, and will punish the sinner with a double stroke of vengeance, one for his guilty sensuality, and the other for his hateful dissembling. If I would give an instance of this pretence, I think it is found nowhere more frequently than among the drunkards, the passionate, and the unclean; and such persons also discover the vanity of their pretences, in that they always excuse their sins, and seldom or never mourn under them.

2. If your iniquity, that frequently besets you, arise from any bodily disorder, which you have brought on yourself by your own sins, dare not murmur and charge the providence of God with this your disease or impotence, but maintain a humbling sense of your own guilt, which, perhaps, God hath thus chastised in righteousness: And let younger sinners avoid all those guilty practices that may turn their very nature and better constitution into vice and raging appetite, or into such diseases as may expose them to the violent and unruly insults of flesh and blood. Let them take heed of indulging vehement desires or aversions, even to common, indifferent, or lawful objects, lest affection get the ascendant, and subject the flesh; and by that means the soul also, to a slavish habit of appetite and passion.

3. Let not those persons, whose happier constitution, or uninterrupted health, gives them some advantages in this respect, throw off their daily watchfulness, or neglect prayer, lest a vain self-confidence betray them into foul iniquities: And let them remember too, that their guilt will be the greater. Nor should those whose apetites and passions are become more unruly, either by the original temperature of their flesh and blood, or by particular distempers, indulge themselves more easily in a sinful compliance, under pretence that their guilt is less; unless they are content to dwell for ever in fire and sorrow, upon this condition, that some of the sorrows of hell be sharper than theirs, and some part of the flame be hotter and fiercer. Oh! rather think that you are called by the providence of God to a stricter watch, to more frequent and fervent prayer, and to a more laborious resistance of the flesh; and the grace of Christ is sufficient to assist the weakest warrior, and make him an overcomer even in the hardest conflict. But this naturally leads me on to the next question.

Question VI. Whether there be not a very unequal distribution of providence in these various constitutions of mankind? And how can this be reconciled to strict justice, to make the difficulties of the state of trial so much harder in one man than it is in another, by exposing him to much stronger temptations?

Answer. This difficulty, which dwells on the lips of profane sinners, is easily solved by attending to a few such propositions as these:

1. This must be laid down as an eternal and an immovable truth, that the great God has all possible perfections belonging to his nature, and his whole conduct in providence is ever regulated by those perfections; so that he can no more be unjust, than he can be impotent or ignorant; nor can any part of his conduct be unrighteous, any more than it can be weak or unskilful.

2. It is evident to the universal observation of heathens, as well as christians, that mankind is a fallen and degenerate rank of beings, who have lost their primitive innocence and happiness; and are running on to deeper guilt and misery, with headlong and thoughtless haste: Though it is only the scripture that informs us how this came to pass, which philosophers, by the light of nature, could never find out.

3. If the whole race of creatures, which were so degenerate, had been put under the most difficult tests of obedience, in a state of trial appointed in order to their recovery from ruin, not one of them had any just reason to complain or murmur against their sovereign Ruler in the methods of his wisdom working toward their recovery.

4. If some of these fallen and degenerate beings have, therefore, some easier circumstances of trial appointed to them, such ought to be very thankful indeed, but others

ought by no means to quarrel with their Maker, or treat their fellow-creatures with envy. *Is thine eye evil, because he is good?* Matt. xx. 15.

5. Perhaps many of those who have less inward temptations in the flesh, are, in the course of providence, exposed to greater outward temptations in the world; and in this case, the state of trial for both of them may be equally difficult; the one is balanced with the other.

6. How great soever the difficulties appear, which any soul is exposed to by the unhappy circumstances of flesh and blood, to which it is united, there is sufficient relief provided in the covenant of grace; there is sufficient atonement and pardon in the blood of Christ to remove the deepest guilt, and sufficient aids of the blessed Spirit promised in the gospel, to mortify the most violent appetites and perverse affections of the flesh; and there are many souls now in heaven, who wrestled hard with as vile constitutions of body here on earth as you are vexed with, but have been made conquerors by the power of this gospel.

7. Consider also, that the harder the fight is, the brighter shall be the crown, and the most laborious combat shall be attended with the fairest prize. Maintain your conflict with flesh and blood, though the strife may be never so sharp and painful; hold out till you are called up to the world of spirits, and you shall find *that your labour was not in vain.*

Have a care then, O man, of contending with God thy Maker; nor let the earthen vessel say to the potter, *why hast thou formed me thus?* If thou givest a loose to thy corruptions, because they are strong, thou practisest the same folly as if the keeper should give a loose to a lion, because it is a very wild and large one, and let him run at random because he is full of rage. What dost thou think the event will be, O sinner? When thy native appetites are still grown stronger by indulgence, and become utterly ungovernable, and thou art plunged into unspeakable guilt and endless misery, what a cutting reflection it will be to thy conscience, that, instead of watching, praying, and striving against thine inbred sins, thou wert ever quarreling at the great God thy Maker, that he did not form thy nature just according to thy directions: Especially when thou shalt see others advanced to high seats in glory, and reaping the joys of the christian conquest, who had as many adversaries to wrestle with in the days of their flesh, and each of them as violent and as mighty as thine.

Question VII. If the springs of sin lie so much in the flesh, are not some methods of reforming the flesh proper to be practised, in order to facilitate the work of mortification, to cure our sinful distempers, to prevent actual transgression, and break the habits of sin?

Answer. Since the seeds and occasions of sin lie so much in the flesh and blood, doubtless it is our duty to take some care that these seeds of iniquity be suppressed and killed, as far as possible, by all proper methods; such as do not necessarily interfere with other commands of God, or plain duties of christianity. But in all matters of this nature, persons are in danger of running into extremes.

The papists require a certain abstinence from meats, and *forbid to marry*, without a due attendance to the circumstances of times, places, and persons; whereby superstition is supported, and sinful appetites are often irritated, instead of suppressing them. At other times they wear sackcloth on their flesh, they scourge and whip themselves, they lay their bodies under much painful discipline, and sometimes too under bloody correction, in order to mortify sin. But it was never required of God, that we should break

the sixth command in order to keep the seventh; for the advice of Christ about parting with a *right hand*, or a *right eye*, Matt. v. 29. is to be taken metaphorically for the mortification of darling sins, or at least, in a comparative sense, that it is better to bear the loss of a limb than to be eternally miserable, if there were no other possible way of escape.

Besides, it is part of their design also in *popery*, to make some sort of atonement and satisfaction for past sins by these superstitious severities, which are so far from being acceptable to God in this sense, that they dishonour the blood of Christ, and will be abhorred of the Father. Some *protestants* run to another extreme, and because our religion is spiritual, therefore they neglect many due restraints of the flesh, and think to secure themselves from sin merely by the exercises of the mind, without due guard or care to keep the body under proper discipline, in order to mortify *the lusts thereof*. They are ready to imagine that this is too legal a way of mortification, that it detracts from the liberty and privilege of the christian state, to *keep under the flesh* by any such methods of self-government.

But in opposition to these two extremes, the scripture seems plainly to lead us to a medium; and the rules which may be drawn from the word of God, may be chiefly comprised under these few heads:

1. Never dare indulge the craving of the flesh in any one sinful appetite or inclination; much less *make provision for it, to fulfil the lusts thereof;* Rom. xiii. 14. Here indeed you should be well informed what is and what is not sinful, and not bind the body to extravagant and unreasonable restraints, under a mistaken notion of sin and duty. But when you are once, upon just grounds, satisfied what is unlawful, then, if sinful neighbours, or if sinful self *entice, consent thou not; for every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed;* Prov. i. 10. James i. 14. Compliance with sin is the way to make sin strong: Every such indulgence gives it courage to demand more, and makes the inclinations grow into a confirmed habit. It is the character of the children of wrath, that they *fulfil the desires of the flesh;* Eph. ii. 3.

2. Keep out of the way of temptation. Whatsoever place, company, diversion, or unnecessary business, you have found ready to provoke a corrupt passion, avoid it as much as possible. *Remove thy way afar off, and come not nigh the door of her house;* Prov. v. 8.

3. Deny the flesh sometimes in its lawful appetites, to teach it subjection; and let it learn to be governed, by being sometimes restrained and disappointed in its innocent desires, that it may with more ease be withheld when unlawful objects appear. The holy apostle seems to have this in his eye, when he tells the *Corinthians, that he that striveth for the mastery* must be *temperate in all things:* And he assures them, that he *keeps his own body under, and brings it into subjection;* 1 Cor. ix. 25, 27. And in the last verse of the eighth chapter, *he will eat no flesh while the world stands, rather than make his brother offend.* Surely then he would use the same self-denial, rather than be in danger of giving himself leave to offend.

4. Keep the body in such temper and circumstances as may render it fittest for the present duty. If excess of faintness and feeble spirits make it unfit for service, refresh it with the proper comforts of life. If, through excess of vigour, and a florid state of the blood, it grow unfit for any duties of religion, or lead the mind astray to dangerous vanities and allurements, it may sometimes be kept under by diligence in labour, by

sparing diet, and diminished hours of sleep. When *Jeshurun waxed fat, he kicked;* Deut. xxxii. 15. And the danger of Sodom was plenty and luxury, which the scripture describes by *fulness of bread,* joined with *abundance of idleness;* Ezek. xvi. 49.

And it is upon this account that you find fasting joined with prayer in the New Testament, as well as in the Old; and perhaps the word watching, which is coupled therewith, may in some places be supposed to include its literal sense also; for abstinence from full measures of food and sleep may give occasional assistance to the soul in devout exercises; and where experience finds that a full indulgence either of sleep or food unfits the body, or clogs the soul in any duties of religion, there those appetites of the flesh are certainly to be restrained.

I might add in the last place, that if any sharp diseases of the body, or disordered humours, awaken the sinful ferments of any passion or appetite in a more than ordinary manner, seek relief from the physician, to restore the flesh to its best state of service to the soul; that it may be delivered, through the divine blessing, from vexing disquietudes, from sudden surprises of sin, from the feeble flutterings of animal nature, from languor and heaviness, and every other infirmity; and may join cheerfully and regularly with thy willing soul, to glorify God, thy Maker, and thy Saviour.

But after all, never imagine that these, or any other methods of mortification, will be effectual to suppress and cure one sin, without converting and renewing grace, without the knowledge and faith of Jesus Christ, who is the only Redeemer of mankind, appointed to save us from our sins; the only physician able to cure our spiritual maladies. It is a deep sense of the universal corruption of nature, together with a betrusting our whole selves into the hands of Christ, to be sanctified and saved, is the only effectual and sure way to holiness. It is *faith* must *purify the heart;* Acts xv. 9. It is by the influences of the *great and precious promises* of the gospel, that we must be made partakers of a divine nature, and escape the corruption that is in the world through lust; 2 *Peter* i. 4. All our labours, short of regeneration, and an entire change of the whole soul, by the mighty work of the Spirit of Christ, are but like nipping the blossoms of a poisonous tree, like cutting off the twigs, or lopping the branches, while the fatal stock stands firm still, and the root maintains its life and full vigour. Thus it will be ever springing with new shoots, and bring forth fruits of guilty and mortal savour. But converting grace is a blow at the root; it kills the sinful principle, or, at least, gives it a deadly wound. Seek earnestly, therefore, the Spirit of Christ, to renew your whole natures: *Walk under the influences of this blessed Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh;* Gal. v. 16, 24. For it is only *they that are Christ's,* who *have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts;* and if, by the assistances of this *Spirit, you mortify the deeds of the body,* you shall have a life here on earth, made up of the peace and beauty of holiness, and you shall die out of this world, into a diviner life of glory. *Amen.*

END OF VOL. I.

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